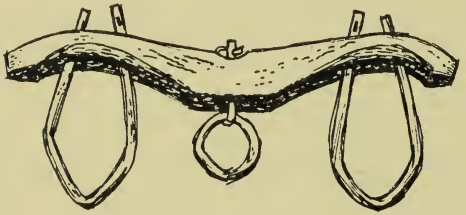
George, Charles
Honest Abe; an inspiring play of early American background.

LINCOLN ROOM



BAKER'S PROFESSIONAL PLAYS

Honest Abe

An Inspiring Play of
Early American Background

by

CHARLES GEORGE

Historic Costume for the Stage

by Lucy Barton
illustrated by David Sarvis

☆ This book is designed primarily to be of assistance to those who costume plays. It should prove of equal value to students of fashion design, stylists, and modistes generally, even to saleswomen in dress-shops who wish to deal intelligently with their clients.

In the educational world it will prove valuable to all students of "speech arts" which includes the history of the theatre, directing, and the mounting of a play as well as acting, and especially, of course, to those concentrating on stage design. In art schools it should be used as a text book by students of fashion drawing and illustration generally and as collateral reading by students of architecture, interior decoration and applied design. In high school, junior college and senior college, it will be found valuable as collateral reading for the preparation of special topics in European and United States history and in Literature courses.

In nineteen of the twenty chapters the heritage of European and European-American dress is traced from Egypt, through the lands mentioned in the Bible, to Greece, Rome, Byzantium, then to Europe proper and finally to its offshoots in the New World. The twentieth chapter is devoted to the problem of the workshop.

Each of the nineteen historical chapters is illustrated by from twenty to twenty-five pen and ink drawings, the majority of them full-length figures, some details of decorative motifs, jewelry, or unusual accessories.

Each chapter covers approximately the same number of topics and each is grouped in so far as possible in the same order. Except for a few cross-references, usually to illustrations, each chapter is a separate unit, so that the designer may, if he wishes, concentrate on one chapter in costuming a given play.

The author has had a wide experience in costuming hundreds of plays and pageants; she created the Elizabethan wardrobe used by the players at the Old Globe Theatre, A Century of Progress, Chicago, and on tour, and only recently taught History of Costume at the University of Iowa.

The work with its 650 pages of text and hundreds of illustrations is published in one volume at $5.00 net per copy. A descriptive circular of its entire contents will be mailed to any address upon request.

BAKER'S PLAYS

178 TREMONT STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

448 SOUTH HILL STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

HONEST ABE

A Three-Act Play of Lincoln's Youth

by Charles George

Author of the following dramatizations: "Peck's Bad Boy," "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," etc.

BAKER'S PLAYS

178 TREMONT ST. BOSTON, MASS. AND 448 SO. HILL ST. LOS ANGELES, CAL.

HONEST ABE

CONCERNING THE PLAY

" Honest Abe " is one of the very few plays ever written which deals exclusively with the early life of Lincoln. And it is the newest and undoubtedly the greatest one.

The distinguished author of this play, Charles George, first introduces Abe at the age of twenty-one when he first comes to New Salem, Ill. Employed as a clerk in the general store of Denton Offut (where the entire action of the play is laid), young Lincoln soon becomes the town's most popular citizen. He is famed for his quick wit, his flair for telling an amusing story, and his athletic prowess. Challenged by the town bully, Jack Armstrong, Abe whips the ruffian and wins Armstrong's undying friendship and admiration.

With his great thirst for knowledge and his love of books, Abe soon becomes a close companion of Mentor Graham, the schoolmaster, as well as Jack Kelso, a lovable vagabond, who has all the plays of Shakespeare on the tip of his tongue.

Hearing of the arrival in New Salem of this long-legged, gawky young man, three of the Reverend Cameron's daughters, Mary, Lou and Betsy pay the store a visit. They are accompanied by Ann Rutledge and her older sister, Margaret. Betsy Cameron is quite taken with Abe but when he sees the beautiful Ann Rutledge it is a case of love at first sight.

Prosperous days do not come to Offut's store, so he persuades Abe to take over the business in partnership with William Berry. Abe neglects the business for his " book-larnin'," leaving the store to the management of Berry, who neglects it for other reasons.

In August, 1835, a plague of fever sweeps over Sangamon County and Ann is stricken and dies. With the store a failure and Ann dead, the world comes tumbling down around Abe's feet. He is about to give up in despair when friends, including Mr. and Mrs. Bowling Green,

intervene and Abe sets about reading law in earnest, with a law office in Springfield and a seat in the legislature his goal.

But before he starts for Springfield, Margaret Rutledge, Ann's sister, pays him a visit and tells him of greater things that Ann had envisioned for him. The play ends with Abe determined to scale the heights for Ann's sake.

This play also introduces a little-known episode in Lincoln's life in the form of a romantic encounter with Miss Mary Owens, from Kentucky.

A cast of fourteen widely diversified characters contribute to the humor, pathos, wit, dramatic incident, thrills, philosophy and beauty of a truly great play about the greatest of all Americans.

HONEST ABE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Abraham Lincoln.
Jack Kelso.
Jack Armstrong.
Mentor Graham.
Rev. John Cameron.
Denton Offut.
Bowling Green.
Ann Rutledge.
Margaret Rutledge.
Mary Cameron.
Lou Cameron.
Betsy Cameron.
Nancy Green.
Mary Owens.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The entire action of the play takes place in a general store in New Salem, Ill.

Act I. Summer of 1831.

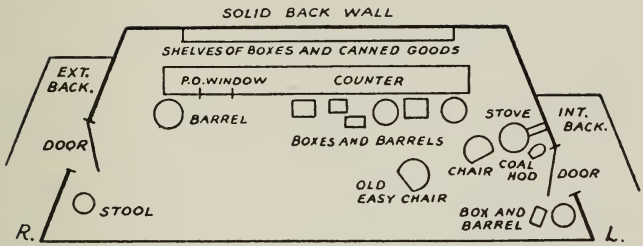
Act II. Scene 1. One year later.
Scene 2. August of 1835.

Act III. Sometime afterward. Late afternoon of a winter's day.

SET

A rough, primitive interior made of clapboards and irregularly cut lumber. It is unplastered and the beams are plainly visible overhead. The back wall is solid. In front of it are crude shelves containing hardware, stoneware, cups and saucers, plates, dishes, bolts of calico prints, hats, bonnets, shoes, boxes of gloves, socks and tobacco, bags of coffee, tea and salt, and other sundries. An improvised counter of boards on trestles is in front of the shelves. At the right end of counter is a small wicket with iron bars. Above it is painted in irregular letters: "U. S. POST OFFICE, NEW SALEM, ILL." On the counter will be found old-fashioned weighing scales, wrapping paper, old newspapers and several balls of cord. In front of counter are numerous balls and boxes. One box contains crackers. A door down L. leads to a bedroom. A large door at R. leads to the exterior and is backed by wood wings. Both doors have latches and a large bar for bolting. Above door L. is a small stove with a pipe. An empty coal hod and shovel stands by the stove and a broken chair in front of it. A box and barrel below door L. A rickety old rocker or easy chair is at L. C. Stool below door R. On the wall is a placard reading: "ANDY JACKSON (OLD HICKORY), OUR PRESIDENT." An old lantern (or two) hangs from the beams. The floor is bare. There is a general air of untidiness and confusion. The lights on stage are up full and the morning sunlight streams in through the open door R.

STAGE DIAGRAM



PROPERTY PLOT

Act I

Crude wooden shelves in rear of set.

On shelves are found hardware, stoneware, cups and saucers, plates, dishes, bolts of calico prints and muslins, hats, bonnets, shoes, boxes of gloves, socks, tobacco, bags of coffee, tea and salt and other sundries.

An improvised counter of boards on trestles.

On counter will be found old-fashioned weighing scales, wrapping paper, old newspapers, balls of cord.

In front of counter, boxes and barrels, one box containing crackers.

Small stove with pipe at L.

Empty coal hod and shovel and chair by stove.

Box and a barrel down L.

Old, broken easy chair at L. C.

Small stool down R.

Barrel at R. end of counter.

On wall is placard reading: "Andy Jackson (Old Hickory), Our President."

An old lantern (or two) hangs from beams above.

Coin in Cameron's pocket.

Act II

Sugar and large scoop in barrel by counter.
Small basket for Ann.
Corncob pipe and matches back of counter for Denton.
Book for Mentor.
Printed sign reading: "All outstanding bills must be paid before further credit is given. Berry and Lincoln."
Another printed sign reading: "A. Lincoln. Postmaster."
Bass drum or piece of sheet iron off stage R. for thunder.
Strong light off R. to be blinked for lightning.
Sound of rain off stage is made by rolling dried peas or beans around in a wire sieve.
A perforated pipe is hung outside door R. with a hose attached for effect of falling rain. A water-proof canvas on floor which can be removed after Act II.

Act III

Snow effect outside door R.
White cloth on floor outside door R.
Large, old-fashioned law book.
Red light in stove L. to denote fire.
Coin in Kelso's trousers pocket.
Large pair of buckskin gloves under counter up C.

HONEST ABE

ACT I

SCENE.—*Interior of* DENTON OFFUT'S *general store.*

PLACE.—*New Salem, Ill.*

TIME.—*Summer of 1831.*

(*At rise of curtain:* DENTON OFFUT *is discovered back of counter up* C. *arranging the stock on the shelves. He is a man in his middle age whose hair might be slightly streaked with grey. He is loud, boastful, almost arrogant. He wears an old torn shirt open at the neck; dust and dirt-covered pants, and rough, worn shoes. His face is ruddy and weather-beaten. As he works, he sings in a loud and raucous voice the first few lines of "The Star Spangled Banner." In the midst of this,* REVEREND JOHN CAMERON *enters* R. *He is a tall, dignified, rather pompous elderly man with white hair and long white sideburns. His voice is resonant and his speech denotes a culture above that of* DENTON'S. *Also he is better dressed, wearing dark trousers that strap under his shoes, a fancy vest, high stock collar with large bow tie, a long, dark frock coat, and a tall, stovepipe hat. He carries a cane hewn from the small limb of a tree. He pauses inside doorway for a second and then comes up to counter at* R. *of* DENTON.)

CAMERON.

Good morning, Denton.

DENTON.

(*Stops singing abruptly and turns.*) Oh, good mornin', Reverend Cameron. Didn't hear ya come in.

CAMERON.

(*Smiling.*) You were so busy singing. What's the tune? Something new?

DENTON.

It's that piece that feller, Francis Scott Key, writ when he was shet up in that fort way back east in Baltimore, time the British was fightin' us. It's a nice song. Wouldn't be surprised if it'd git to be right well-known some of these days.

CAMERON.

(*Casually.*) I guess not. Those songs have their little day and then folks forget all about them. (*Looks around store, going to* L.) Right nice store you got here, Denton.

DENTON.

(*Proudly.*) Yes siree! On July the eighth, I paid the County Commissioners' Court of Sangamon County five dollars fer a license to run this here store.

CAMERON.

(*Surprised.*) Five dollars fee?

DENTON.

That's right, Reverend.

CAMERON.

That means you got about a thousand dollars worth of stock. (*Comes to cracker box, picks up a cracker and eats it.*)

DENTON.

(*Scratches his head, figuring.*) Purty close to it, I figger.

CAMERON.

Well, Denton, you have my best wishes and my blessings for success. (*Picks up another cracker and eats it.*)

DENTON.

(*Eyeing this procedure.*) Reckon I'll do purty well if folks *buys* things. Them crackers is fer *sale.*

CAMERON.

(*Laughing.*) Oh, excuse me! I was just sampling them to see if they're any good, thinking I might *buy* some.

DENTON.

(*Brightly.*) Well, now, if that's the case, you jest go right ahead and sample.

CAMERON.

(*Smilingly, he takes another cracker.*) You might wrap me up about a pound.

DENTON.

(*Coming from behind* R. *end of counter.*) A pound? Why, that wouldn't go nowheres with that big family of eleven gals that you got.

CAMERON.

Then you'd better make it two pounds. By the way, how much are they a pound?

DENTON.

Two bits. (*Puts iron weight on one end of scales, takes large scoop from other end and scoops crackers from box, weighs them and adds a few with his hands.*)

CAMERON.

(*Amazed.*) Twenty-five cents a pound? My, they come high!

DENTON.

Yes, they does; by time we haul goods over that 'ere bad road from Havana or Springfield, or push it on a flat-boat 'long the river to New Salem, cost o' transpertation runs purty high. (*Dumps crackers in a paper bag.*) But it won't be so turrible long 'fore all that'll be changed. We'll soon have a reg'lar steamboat runnin' up and down the Sangamon River. (*Hands the bag to* CAMERON, *who gives him a coin.*)

CAMERON.

(*Doubtfully.*) I hardly think so. (*Comes to easy chair* L. C.)

DENTON.

(*Pocketing coin and following him down* C.) They got steamboats on the Mississippi, ain't they?

CAMERON.

Yes, but they won't last. They aren't safe. Always blowing up. Why, it's getting so that folks are afraid to ride on them. (*Sits.*) The future water transportation will be canals like the Erie. Those boats are safe and good; strong mule-power can always be depended upon. (*Firmly.*) No, Denton, steamboats are just a passing fad that will blow up like the boats themselves.

DENTON.

That ain't what Abe Lincoln says. He took a cargo of goods on a flatboat down to N'Orleans last winter fer me and he says steamboats is gettin' thicker'n flies on the Mississippi. And I hear tell they got a steam enjine on a railroad back east that makes all of fifteen miles a hour. (*In amazement.*) 'Magine *that!* That's *travelin'*.

CAMERON.

That's too fast for comfort and safety. Folks won't risk their lives like that. Those contraptions 'll soon die out.

DENTON

(*Goes to stool* R. *and sits.*) That ain't what Abe Lincoln says. He says it's only the beginnin'. (*With great emphasis.*) Why, he says there will come a time when men'll fly through the air like birds. Yes, siree! (*Makes a sweeping gesture.*)

CAMERON.

That's impossible.

DENTON.

He says it says so in the Bible. Bein' a preacher-man, you oughta *know* that.

CAMERON.

Yes, but that passage doesn't mean they will actually *fly*.

DENTON.

Then what *does* it mean?

CAMERON.

(*At a loss for words.*) Why—it means—well—it denotes—(*clearing his throat*) well—it doesn't mean they will fly like birds because men haven't wings. Such a thing could never come to pass.

DENTON.

(*Firmly.*) Abe says it will. He's a awful smart feller, Abe is. Why, he kin write and spell and read most any book you'd put afore him.

CAMERON.

Who *is* this Abe Lincoln?

DENTON.

Tall, lean, lanky young feller from over in Coles County near Charleston. That's where his folks live. They did live in Macon County but the fever and ague druv 'em out. Afore that they lived in Indiana, but a plague of the milk-sick druv 'em outta there.

CAMERON.

Can't say I ever heard of the family.

DENTON.

Old Tom Lincoln is the boy's pap. His ma was Nancy Hanks but she died sometime back and old Tom married a widow-woman named Sally Bush Johnston. He didn't lose much time neither. (*Laughs, loudly.*)

CAMERON.

Don't know the family.

DENTON.

Abe's comin' to work here in the store fer me. Expect him most any time now. (*Rises, goes to door* R. *and looks out.*) He's a hustler, that Abe. Ain't a lazy bone in his hull body.

CAMERON.

(*Rising.*) Well, you'll need a hustler to make a go of your new store, what with all the opposition you've got. (*Doubtfully.*) Three stores are too many for New Salem.

DENTON.

(*Boastfully.*) Yes, I'm afeerd the other two'll find that out once Abe starts workin' here. (*Coming to* CAMERON.) Ya never seen sech a feller to make friends. Everywhere he goes, folks gathers 'round him to hear his stories. Greatest storyteller ya ever did see. He tells a good un about a country preacher and a lizard. Did ya ever hear it?

CAMERON.

Can't say that I have.

DENTON.

Set down and I'll tell it to ya. (*Goes up and gets a box and brings it down* R. *of easy chair.*)

CAMERON.

I don't care much for stories.

DENTON.

(*Laughing.*) This'n 'll kill ya. Set down, 'cause ya'll *fall down* from laughin' when I tell it to ya.

CAMERON.

(*Sits in easy chair, reluctantly.*) Well ——

DENTON.

(*Sitting on box.*) Well, it seems back in the tall timbers a preacher was deliverin' a sermon. All he had on was a pair of baggy pantaloons held up with one button and no suspenders, whilst his shirt was fastened with just one button. In a loud voice he said his text: "I am the Lord whom I represent today." About that time a little blue lizard ran up one of his pants legs. The preacher kept on preachin' and slappin' at his legs. Finally, he couldn't stand it no longer and he unloosed the one button and kicked off'n his pants. (*Laughs.*)

CAMERON.

(*Sternly and without a smile.*) Very amusing.

DENTON.

Wait! That ain't all. Now comes the funny part. This'll kill ya. (*Laughs, heartily.*) Just as the preacher said his text agin: "I am the Lord whom I represent today," the lizard crawled up under his shirt and the preacher loosed the one collar button and off come the shirt. Just then a old lady stood up and yelled: "If you represent the Lord, then I'm done with the Bible." (*Yells with laughter.*)

CAMERON.

(*Rises, indignantly.*) That's sacrilegious. I don't think much of a young man who'd tell such a story.

DENTON.

(*Rises in amazement.*) Why, Reverend, there ain't a sacrilegious bone in Abe Lincoln's body. He's a upstandin', God-fearin' feller and he knows as much scripture as *you* do. He'd make a good preacher himself if he didn't kinda have a hankerin' after law. Why, he don't drink nothin' at all and he don't even play no cards. Can you 'magine?

CAMERON.

(*Reluctantly.*) Well—that's quite a recommendation for a young man. I'll come over and meet him when he arrives and see if he'll join us at service this Sunday. (*Crosses to* R.)

DENTON.

(*Putting box back by counter.*) He'll be there all right and I'll betcha if ya go wrong in any of yer scripture Abe'll be able to set ya right.

CAMERON.

(*Pompously.*) I'm always very *sure* of my text.

DENTON.

Ya'd *have* to be with Abe Lincoln in yer congregation. Why, say! Abe's as smart as anyone in the country.

(JACK ARMSTRONG *enters door* R. *He is a powerfully built man in his twenties, short and stocky. He is rough and tough in his manner and speech, the typical "bragging" bully. He wears old clothes, dirty and torn, and a battered wide-brimmed felt hat. A close-cropped black beard adorns his ruddy and dirty face. He stands by door and listens to the balance of* DENTON'S *speech.*) Why, he kin out-run, out-throw, out-wrestle, out-lift and throw down any man in Sangamon County.

(ARMSTRONG *swaggers to* C. *between the two men.*)

ARMSTRONG.

(*Nastily.*) Who's this that kin do all this?

DENTON.

Abe Lincoln.

ARMSTRONG.

And who's Abe Lincoln?

DENTON.

Young feller what's comin' to work fer me.

ARMSTRONG.

What's he look like?

DENTON.

He's mighty tall—over six feet—ain't so much meat on his bones but what there is is all muscle.

ARMSTRONG.

I just seen a tall, skinny feller down by the river spinnin' yarns to a lotta children.

DENTON.

(*Laughing.*) That's Abe all right. He's a great hand at spinnin' yarns and he's a great feller fer children. He always says they seem closer to God than us grown-ups.

CAMERON.

That shows a fine character. I'm beginning to like this young Lincoln even before I meet him.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Very surly.*) Well—I don't like nobody what claims he kin out-throw and out-wrestle me. I'm the champeen wrestler of the Clary Grove Boys, the toughest bunch of fellers in these here parts and *nobody* kin beat me. (*Pats himself on chest with assurance.*)

DENTON.

(*Laughing.*) Betcha Abe kin.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Going close to* DENTON.) That bean pole? He'll hafta show *me.*

DENTON.

Betcha this four bits I jest got from Reverend Cameron fer crackers (*pulls coin from pocket*) and a bran' new jackknife that Abe'll have ya on the ground quicker'n a wink.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Clenching his fists at* DENTON.) I'll jest double that bet. (*Turning to* CAMERON.) What'll *you* bet, Parson?

CAMERON.

(*Stiffly.*) I do not indulge in any forms of betting.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Doffing his hat in respect.*) 'Scuse me, Parson. I fergot. (*Turning to* DENTON.) Say! It seems ter me that I've saw that young Lincoln feller around these here parts afore.

DENTON.

Mebbe you seen him last April when he was pilotin' my flatboat to N'Orleans and she stuck on the Cameron milldam.

CAMERON.

(*Going to* DENTON, *quickly.*) Is that the long-shanked young man who saved Walter Carman and John Seamon from drowning in the flooded river?

DENTON.

(*Proudly.*) He's the feller.

CAMERON.

I've never seen such a cool head in my life.

DENTON.

If it hadn't 'a' been fer Lincoln's bravery them two boys wouldn't be with us now. He ain't afeerd of nothin'. (*Looks at* ARMSTRONG, *pointedly.*)

ARMSTRONG.

(*Pulling up his arms to exercise his muscles.*) He ain't met up with *me* yit.

DENTON.

You can't go on half the rampage a flooded river kin. (*Laughs and* ARMSTRONG *gives a furious grunt, walking up stage.*)

CAMERON.

The way he piloted that flatboat over my milldam was nothing short of remarkable. She stuck on the dam and hung there for twenty-four hours, the bow in the air and the stern in the water, the cargo slowly settling backwards —shipwreck almost certain.

DENTON.

Not with Abe Lincoln as cap'n. He jest unloaded them pork barrels into a neighborin' boat, bored a hole in the end of the flatboat as she hung over the dam, let the water out, and dropped the boat over the dam and reloaded and was on his way to N'Orleans. (*Rubs hands together in happy recollection.*) One o' these days, I'm gonna build a steamboat to run up and down the Sangamon River and make Lincoln cap'n.

CAMERON.

(*Doubtingly.*) Lincoln may be a smart young man, but he could never make a steamboat go on the Sangamon.

DENTON.

(*Pounding hands together with conviction.*) By thunder, with Lincoln in charge, she'd *hafta* go.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Wanders over by cracker box.*) When I take charge of this Lincoln, *he'll* hafta go.

DENTON.

He'll *go* all right—right at that dirty face of yourn. (*Sees* ARMSTRONG *eat a cracker.*) And stop eatin' them crackers.

(*With a defiant air,* ARMSTRONG *puts a handful of crackers in his coat pocket and strolls past* CAMERON *to door* R.)

ARMSTRONG.

When yer new clerk gits here, tell him I'll be back to trim him down a couple o' inches. (*Offers a cracker to* CAMERON.) Have a cracker, Parson! (CAMERON *turns his back on him.* ARMSTRONG *laughs, harshly.*) Don't keer if I do! (*Eats cracker and laughs.*) Mornin', Denton. (*Starts out door, talking to himself.*) Abe Lincoln! (*Laughs, uproariously, and exits* R.)

CAMERON.

(*Shaking head, sadly.*) They're a bad lot—those Clary Grove Boys—and Armstrong's the worst of the lot. I wish we could rid the community of them.

DENTON.

If anyone kin do it, *Abe* kin.

CAMERON.

You think a heap of him, don't you, Denton?

DENTON.

Yes *siree,* Reverend! He's diff'rent from other young fellers.

CAMERON.

In what way?

DENTON.

I can't 'zactly explain it—jest he's jest *diff'rent.* You take you 'n' me fer instance. We're jest *ordinary* folks

and I guess we always *will* be. But not *Abe.* (*Looking into space as though seeing the future.*) Why, that feller might git to be most *anything* afore he dies. Nothin'd be too great fer him. He might even git to be President.

CAMERON.

(*Laughing, doubtfully.*) Hardly *that,* Denton.

DENTON.

(*Firmly.*) Yes, even *that.* He comes from the same stout stock that Andy Jackson does and he's jest as tough as Old Hickory and jest as smart, too. Yes, siree!

(ABRAHAM LINCOLN *and* MENTOR GRAHAM *enter door* R. ABE *is a tall, gaunt young man of twenty-two.* [*If the actor playing* ABE *isn't quite the prescribed six feet or over, this height can be achieved by building up the heels on his shoes and wearing lifts inside the shoes. It is also suggested that he let his dark hair grow rather long before playing this rôle.*] *He wears loose-fitting pantaloons of some cheap, dirty material; no vest, no coat, and one suspender, a calico shirt open at neck, old and worn shoes laced together with cord and a battered straw hat. His face is ruddy. He speaks with a slow, soft drawl. He is awkward and diffident.* MENTOR *is a short, chunky, elderly man with white hair. His costume is somewhat after the manner of* CAMERON'S *except that it isn't as elegant. He is a soft-spoken, kindly man with a habit of looking over his nose glasses as he speaks.*)

ABE.

(*As they enter.*) Yes, sir, Mr. Graham, I guess about the greatest man God ever put on this earth was George Washington. (*They laugh together and come to* C. *as* ABE *sees* DENTON.) Well, sir, Mr. Offut, here I be t' start workin'.

DENTON.

(*Shaking hands with* ABE.) Howdy, Abe. Mighty glad to have ya here, too, I kin tell ya.

ABE.

(*Laughingly.*) You kin tell me that better after I've been here a month. Twelve dollars is a heap o' money fer you t' be payin' me. Looks like I gotta git busy and *earn* it. A feller's gotta be worthy of his hire.

DENTON.

(*Warmly.*) I ain't afeerd o' that, Abe. I gotta heap o' confidence in ya.

ABE.

Well, now then, it's up t' me t' live *up* to that confidence, which is jest like a target fer a feller t' shoot at. Ya gotta hit the mark.

(*All laugh.*)

DENTON.

(*Nods toward* CAMERON.) I want ya to meet Reverend John Cameron, Abe.

ABE.

(*Going to him with outstretched hand.*) I'm right glad to know ya, Reverend.

(CAMERON *puts bag of crackers on stool* R.)

CAMERON.

(*As they shake hands.*) So this is young Mr. Lincoln!

ABE.

Jest fergit the Mister part. I'm Abe Lincoln.

CAMERON.

(*They continue to shake hands.*) I'm mighty glad to know you, Abe.

ABE.

Thanks, Reverend. (*They unclasp hands.*) What's yer church? Methodist or Baptist?

CAMERON.

Neither one. Presbyterian. What's *your* denomination?

ABE.

I ain't partickler, jest so it's the word of God. Ya see, I figger that when we come t' die, we don't say, "Oh, Methodist God! Oh, *Baptist* God! Oh, Presbyterian God!" We jest look up t' Him and say, "Oh, God!"

MENTOR.

There's a heap of wisdom in those words, Abe.

ABE.

Old Peter Cartwright, a Jackson Democrat, is one o' the best-knowed preachers in southern Illinois. He's a fightin' Methodist and a scorner of Baptists, yit he preaches agin the same thing the Baptists do: gamblin', drinkin' and all loose kind o' livin'. Same's *you* do I reckon, Reverend.

CAMERON.

Yes, we must stamp out and correct all those evils. "Let all things be done decently and in order."

ABE.

That's St. Paul's fust letter to the Corinthians, fourteenth chapter, fortieth verse.

DENTON.

(*Proudly.*) What'd I tell ya, Reverend? Abe knows his Bible all right.

CAMERON.

(*To* DENTON.) I hope he'll always live up to its teachings.

ABE.

Well, now, I try to—*awful hard*—but there's times when a feller's gotta take matters into his own hands and do things his own way—hopin' that the Almighty will see fit t' fergive him fer so doin'.

(*All laugh but* CAMERON *who clears his throat, disapprovingly.*)

CAMERON.

(*Sternly.*) His law is the *only* law.

ABE.

Ye're right, Reverend, but what I mean is sech things like "turnin' the other cheek." If ya do *that,* ye're liable t' git a turrible sore jaw from somebody.

(*This time everybody laughs.*)

MENTOR.

What Abe means is that the Bible can't be interpreted too literally.

ABE.

(*Turning to* MENTOR.) Bein' a schoolmaster, Mr. Graham, you'd know what them high-soundin' words mean and if you'd take the time and trouble sometime, I'd like you t' learn *me* what they mean.

MENTOR.

I'd be glad to *teach* you, Abe.

ABE.

(*Grinning.*) I understand whatcha mean, Mr. Graham. It's *teach*—not *learn.*

MENTOR.

(*Smiling.*) That's right, Abe.

DENTON.

I didn't know you knowed Mr. Graham so well, Abe.

ABE.

(*Going to* DENTON.) Well, now, I didn't when I fust come to New Salem, but the fust thing I always do when I go to a strange place is t' get at the root of eddication and Mr. Graham happens to be the *root* in this community. The things I wanta know are in books and my best friend is the man who'll git me a book I ain't read.

CAMERON.

I have quite a few books at my house, Abe.

ABE.

(*Going to him, eagerly.*) Have ya? Which ones?

CAMERON.

"Æsop's Fables," "Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," and Weems' "The Life of Francis Marion."

ABE.

I read ev'ry doggone one o' them when I lived back in Indiany. Also, a stranger once come through that had "The Life of George Washington," and I read that book through *three* times. (*With admiration.*) He was a great man! What I wouldn't give t' be as great as George Washington.

CAMERON.

I doubt very much if any man will ever be as great again. And even Washington wasn't great in *everything.* "Few great men are great in everything."

ABE.

(*Grinning.*) Ya read *that* outta Weems' "The Life of Francis Marion."

CAMERON.

(*Laughingly.*) That's right, I did.

DENTON.

(*Boastingly.*) What'd I tell ya, Reverend? Ya can't fool *Abe.*

ABE.

I wanta read all the books I kin git aholt of. (*To* MENTOR.) My grammar's purty bad, Mr. Graham. Have ya got a grammar book?

MENTOR.

Well—no—I haven't, Abe, but there's one at Mr. Vaner's house I borrow sometimes. We'll ride over one of these days and borrow it.

ABE.

How fer is it?

MENTOR.

It's all of six miles or more.

ABE.

Them twelve miles 'll be good exercise. I'll walk over and git it tonight.

(*Off stage* R. *there is a growing sound of angry men's voices. Interspersed in the sounds these sentences stand out clearly: "Where is he?" "Let us git at him!"*)

CAMERON.

(*Turning toward door* R.) What's that I hear?

DENTON.

(*Running to door* R.) Sounds like a fight. (*The voices increase in volume.* DENTON *looks out door.*) It's the Clary Grove Boys with Jack Armstrong.

CAMERON.

(*Excitedly.*) He's going to make good his threat.

DENTON.

He's come back after ya, Abe. (*Runs to* ABE *who has sauntered over to* L. MENTOR *is by counter up* C.)

ABE.

What's he come after me fer?

DENTON.

To lick ya, but he can't do it.

MENTOR.

(*Agitatedly, he comes down to* DENTON *and* ABE *at* L.) He's the worst bully in Sangamon County.

CAMERON.

(*Coming to* R. C.) He'll kill you.

ABE.

(*Calmly pushing up his shirt sleeves.*) Who sez so?

MENTOR.

He's a bad lot, Abe.

ABE.

What's he wanta fight *me* fer?

DENTON.

To show ya he's the best man in Sangamon County.

ABE.

(*Grinning.*) Well, now, may the best man win.

(*Now the voices are right outside door* R.)

ARMSTRONG.

(*Off stage* R.) Whar is he? Whar is this Abe Lincoln?

ABE.

(*Calling, loudly.*) Here I be!

(ARMSTRONG *enters door* R. *amid the shouts from off stage such as: "Lick him, Jack!" "Show him who's the best man, Armstrong."*)

ARMSTRONG.

(*Pausing at door and surveying* ABE *with a leer.*) Well! If it ain't the walkin' bean pole!

ABE.

(*Going to* C.) What kin I do fer ya?

ARMSTRONG.

(*Brushing past* CAMERON *to* ABE *at* C.) Offut's been braggin' that you kin out-rassle, out-throw and out-fight any man in Sangamon County. Did ya say that?

ABE.

(*Eyeing him, calmly.*) No, I ain't never bragged that I could. I ain't got no cause t' fight nobody.

ARMSTRONG.

You figger on livin' in New Salem, don'tcha?

ABE.

I'm workin' fer Mr. Offut.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Threateningly.*) No stranger settles down in these here parts lessen I say so.

ABE.

(*Grinning.*) Well, now, what's a feller gotta *do* t' make you *say* so?

ARMSTRONG.

They gotta be as good a man as I be. Unnerstand? (*Shakes fist under* ABE's *nose.*)

(ABE *smiles and then feels* ARMSTRONG's *fist.*)

ABE.

Nice bunch o' fingers ya got there, neighbor. Do you think they'll ever do anything useful?

(DENTON *laughs.* MENTOR *and* CAMERON *are tense with fright.*)

ARMSTRONG.

(*Raging.*) Think ye're smart, don'tcha? Well, I'll jest trim ya down from a bean pole to a walkin' stick.

DENTON.

(*Yelling.*) Show him he can't do it, Abe.

(*Off stage* R. *the crowd yells, "Bring him out here, Jack! We wanta see ya trim him down." Then they roar with laughter.*)

CAMERON.

(*Pleadingly.*) Don't fight him, Abe. It's unchristian.

ABE.

Remember what I told ya about turnin' the other cheek, Reverend.

ARMSTRONG.

You're afeerd to fight me.

ABE.

(*Grinning.*) Well, now, I need a little exercise and I reckon you might be able t' give it to me. Come on,

stranger. (*Goes to door* R. *past* CAMERON *who grabs his arm, pleadingly.*)

[ARMSTRONG *brushes past them to door* R. *and out.*

CAMERON.

Please don't fight him.

ABE.

I'm not hankering for to take him on but he's looking for trouble.

DENTON.

If ya don't lick him, Abe, ya won't be able to stay in New Salem.

ABE.

(*Going to door* R.) Well, now, Mr. Offut, I've handled bigger problems than Mr. Armstrong and I reckon I might have t' handle even bigger problems afore I die. (*Shouts off* R.: "*Come on out.*" "*Git ready t' lick him, Jack.*" *Loud laughter follows these sallies.* ABE *calls out to them.*) I'll be right with ya, boys. (*Pauses at door, turning.*) I'll be back in a few minutes, Mr. Graham, t' talk about that grammar book. [*Exits* R.

(*Loud, nasty jeers are heard off* R. DENTON *runs to door* R. *joined by* CAMERON *and* MENTOR. *They look out anxiously.*)

DENTON.

(*Excitedly.*) I'll betcha that four bits ya paid me for them crackers that Abe'll beat him.

CAMERON.

(*Horrified.*) Mr. Offut, I do not indulge in gambling. My profession is the ministry.

DENTON.

Then use yer perfession right now and say a prayer fer Abe ter win.

(*Off* R. *the shouts are heard:* "*Git at him, Jack.*" "*Come on, Jack.*")

MENTOR.

(*Worriedly.*) I'm afraid for Abe.

DENTON.

Ya needn't be, Mentor. They're startin'! (*Yelling out door.*) Git yer Indian holt on him, Abe.

(*The crowd roars.*)

MENTOR.

Don't let him throw you, Abe.

(*A loud yell is heard off* R.)

CAMERON.

(*Looking out, excitedly.*) He's got Abe on the ground.

DENTON.

But he'll git up agin. (*Yelling.*) What'd I tell ya, Reverend? Ya can't beat Abe!

(*All three are tense with excitement. Slowly,* CAMERON *enters into the spirit of the thing.*)

MENTOR.

Give him the wrist-lock, Abe.

(*Off stage the crowd is yelling, "Throw him!" "Hit him! Hooray!" Sounds of fists hitting on flesh are heard.*)

CAMERON.

Oh, this is terrible! (*Suddenly yelling.*) Don't let him throw you, Abe. Get him, Abe!

(DENTON *looks at* CAMERON *in amazement.*)

DENTON.

Why, Reverend!

(CAMERON *looks abashed. The yelling and jeering continue off* R.)

MENTOR.

(*Jumping with delight.*) There goes Armstrong. Abe's got him down.

DENTON.

(*Yelling like a madman.*) Yipee! Hit him, Abe. Knock him out!

MENTOR.

(*Speaking simultaneously with* DENTON.) That's the boy, Abe!

DENTON.

Spit in his eye!

CAMERON.

(*Yelling.*) Pull out his hair!

(*A roar of disapproval from the crowd.*)

DENTON.

Abe's got him licked. What'd I tell ya, Reverend? Ya can't beat Abe!

ABE.

(*Yelling off* R.) Got enough, Armstrong?

ARMSTRONG.

(*Off* R.) Let's call it quits.

(*The crowd now yell, "Hooray for Lincoln. Ye're all right, Abe." Loud laughter. Then, "He beat ya, Jack." More laughter.* ABE *enters* R. *calmly and unruffled, brushing off his hands on his pants.*)

MENTOR, DENTON and CAMERON.

(*Gathering around him at* C.)
Are you hurt, Abe?
Ya licked him like I said ya would, Abe!
Are you all right, Abe?

ABE.

Little warm, that's all. Kinda hot today fer wrestlin'. (*All laugh.* ARMSTRONG *enters* R. *His coat is off, his shirt is torn, his hair mussed, and under one eye is a dark mark.*) Did ya come back fer another throw, Armstrong?

ARMSTRONG.

I've had enough. I come in ter shake yer hand, Abe

Lincoln. (*He goes to* ABE *at* C. MENTOR *and* GRAHAM *go to* L. CAMERON *is* R. C.) The Clary Grove Boys has 'lected ya ter stay in New Salem.

ABE.

(*As they shake hands.*) Thank ya, neighbor.

ARMSTRONG.

Any man that kin lick me the way you did is welcome here. (*Off* R. *are shouts: "Hooray fer Abe." "Abe Lincoln's all right."*) And the fellers feel that same way.

ABE.

Guess ya'd better do somethin' 'bout that eye of yourn. A little raw meat might help some. I remember when I was a little mite of a tad, I run into a fence at night and blacked my eye. My pap thought a neighbor boy done it and I was jest usin' the fence fer'n excuse. (*All laugh.*) But my ma—(*he pauses and clears his throat*) knowed I was tellin' the truth and she soon fixed up that eye with a little raw meat. Ya might have *yer* ma do the same fer *you.*

ARMSTRONG.

(*With the first show of respect for anything.*) My ma is dead.

ABE.

(*With great reverence.*) Mine's gone, too. And I reckon up there amongst the angels both our mothers is good friends by now, so there ain't no reason why their boys on earth oughtn't t' be good friends also.

CAMERON.

That shows a fine, Christian spirit, Abe.

ABE.

That's the way I'd like t' live, Reverend, if folks would only let me: "With malice toward none." (*Pauses and ponders.*) Say! I must remember that! (*Repeats it as though to himself.*) "With malice toward none." (*To the others.*) I might have t' think of that *agin,* some day.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Going to door* R.) Anything the Clary Grove Boys kin ever do fer ya, Lincoln, jest let us know.

ABE.

Well, now, one of these days you fellers might show me where's the best place t' fish along the river. Outside o' that, I can't think o' nothin' right now.

(*All laugh.*)

ARMSTRONG.

(*As he goes out door* R. *he calls to the mob.*) What's the matter with Abe?

THE MOB.

(*Off* R.) He's all right.

(*Much laughter and yelling off* R. *Gradually, the noise dies away as though the crowd is receding.*)

MENTOR.

I don't guess that mob will ever bother you now, Abe. (*Laughs.*)

DENTON.

I knowed ya'd win, Abe. That feller, Armstrong, is always crowin' about who he kin lick.

ABE.

He reminds me of one o' them stories in Æsop's Fables.

MENTOR.

Let's hear it, Abe.

ABE.

A man was drivin' a four-wheeled wagon and one wheel was creakin' and groanin' something turrible. When the driver asked the other three wheels why the fourth one was creakin' so, they said, "Don'tcha know that the weakest one always makes the most noise?"

(*All laugh, heartily.*)

DENTON and MENTOR.

(*Together.*) That's a good 'un, Abe. That's all right. (*Etc.*)

ABE.

By the way, Reverend, did ya ever hear the story about the preacher and the lizard?

CAMERON.

(*Coughing, uneasily.*) Yes, I've *heard* it—and I'd rather not hear it *again.* (DENTON *laughs.*) And now I believe I'd better be getting along. Gracious! I never thought I'd be a witness to a fight today.

DENTON.

(*Teasingly.*) Kinda got ya a little worked up, didn't it, Reverend?

CAMERON.

(*Coughing, uneasily and moving to door* R.) Not a bit of it. I don't approve of such things.

ABE.

Well, now, it was jest a little innocent fun, Reverend. Don't reckon it'll happen agin. (*Chuckles, pleasantly.*)

CAMERON.

I'd like you to come over to my house and meet my family, Abe.

ABE.

(*Going to him.*) Thank ya, Reverend. That's right kind o' you.

DENTON.

(*Teasingly.*) Reverend's got a big family, too. Eleven darters. Can't tell, Abe, ya might go to sparkin' one o' them eleven gals. (*Laughs.*) Reckon ya wouldn't mind gittin' a few of 'em married off, would ya, Reverend?

CAMERON.

(*Stiffly.*) I'm in no hurry to get rid of any of my daughters.

ABE.

(*Bashfully.*) Well, now, if ya *are,* ya needn't ever count on *me* t' help ya out, Reverend, 'cause I ain't never been much of a hand fer sparkin' gals. (*Quickly.*) Oh, I've been t' taffy-pulls 'n' spellin'-bees 'n' sech like but I ain't got much nerve when it comes t' gals. Reckon I'll always be whatever it 'tis they call a old maid that's a man. (*Laughs, bashfully.*)

MENTOR.

(*Smiling.*) I'd hate to count on that, Abe.

ABE.

But I'd be awful glad t' know yer folks, Reverend. And I thank ya fer the invite.

CAMERON.

We'll introduce you to the best people in town like the Rutledges.

ABE.

Who be the Rutledges?

DENTON.

James Rutledge and his wife run the tavern. They got *three* darters, Ann, Nancy and Margaret. Ann's mighty purty. (*Looks at* ABE *and laughs.*)

ABE.

The purtier they be, the scareder I always git.

(*All laugh.*)

CAMERON.

Well, good morning, Abe. Good morning, Denton. Good morning, Mentor.

[*He exits door* R. *as all reply to him.*

ABE.

(*Seeing bag of crackers on stool* R.) Oh, Reverend, ya fergot somethin'. [*Runs out after him with bag.*

(MENTOR *strolls up to cracker box and takes several, eating them.*)

CAMERON.

(*Off* R.) Thank you, Abe.

(ABE *reënters immediately.*)

DENTON.

Them was the two pound of crackers he bought. And right now, Abe, we gotta make a new rulin' in this store. Everybody has gotta stay outta that cracker box. It's three-quarters gone a'ready and I ain't sold but two pounds. (*Looks at* MENTOR *eating and* MENTOR *quickly swallows what is in his mouth and pockets those in his hand. He goes to stove* L. *and sits.*)

ABE.

(*Looks at* MENTOR *and smiles.*) I'll remember that, Mr. Offut. This store is t' be run on a give-and-take basis. We *give* the goods and *take* their money.

DENTON.

(*Firmly.*) And *no* credit. (*Amending the statement.*) Well—that is—not too *much* credit.

ABE.

I'll put up a sign: "In God we trust. Others must pay."

(*They all laugh.*)

DENTON.

(*Going up* R. *and back of counter.*) Now I'll show ya the stock. (ABE *follows him as they go along the shelves.*) We got calico prints by the yard.

ABE.

They come from way back up east in Massachusetts.

DENTON.

And tea.

ABE.

From China, I reckon.

DENTON.

And coffee.

ABE.

From South America. Brazil, I reckon.

DENTON.

And hardware, stoneware from New York and Pennsylvania.

ABE.

(*Points to post-office window.*) And U. S. mail from all over. (*Coming from behind counter at* R. *and speaking to* MENTOR.) You got a gog'raphy, ain't ya, Mr. Graham?

MENTOR.

Yes, I have.

ABE.

Well, now then, seein' as how I'm workin' among all these things from most ev'ry place, I oughta git t' know all about them places. I read in a old newspaper I got from a man who'd been t' Springfield once that our President, Mr. Andrew Jackson, has a heap o' trouble with foreign relations, as he calls 'em. So I reckon that anything Old Hickory has t' study up, I might as well study up, too.

MENTOR.

That's right, Abe.

ABE.

Does anybody in this town git a newspaper?

DENTON.

Rutledge fam'ly gits one in the mail ev'ry Friday. (*Comes from behind counter at* R.)

ABE.

Then I'll have t' git better acquainted with that fam'ly. (*Laughs.*)

DENTON.

You kin read it *afore* we deliver it to 'em. *I* always do. Ain't much comes in this pust office I don't read. (*Laughs and goes to door* R.) I wanta drop over t' the Herndon

Brothers store t' see how their business is. You're the clerk now, Abe, so I'll leave ya in charge.

ABE.

I'll do my best t' please ya, sir. If you 'n' me work together, we kin make this store the best payin' one in New Salem, fer in *union* there is strength. I always wanta remember that.

DENTON.

(*Laughingly.*) They can't beat ya, Abe. I'll be back afore long. [*Exits* R.

ABE.

(*Looking after* DENTON.) It's nice fer folks t' have sech confidence in ya. (*To* MENTOR.) Jest imagine what it'd be like fer *millions* o' people t' have confidence in ya—like Andy Jackson has.

MENTOR.

(*Rises, comes down* L. *looking over his glasses with a smile.*) *Everybody* hasn't got confidence in our President. Only the *Democrats.* (*They laugh together.*) Even George Washington had his doubters and he was our greatest President. Party politics enter into folks' feelings a great deal.

ABE.

(*Pondering.*) Yes, I reckon so. (*Sits in easy chair* L. C.) Ya know, Mr. Graham, I've got kind of a hankerin' t' git into politics.

MENTOR.

Have you now, Abe? (*Sits on a box down* L.)

ABE.

Yes, I'd like t' study law and all that so's I could have a voice in our government. Ya know, I've got great confidence in the future of the United States.

MENTOR.

Yes, we're going to be a great country one of these days.

ABE.

Why, we're a great country *right now,* Mr. Graham. We jest need developin', that's all. We need steamboats on all navigable rivers. And the rivers that ain't navigable have gotta be made that way like our own Sangamon River.

MENTOR.

I doubt very much if the Sangamon could be made navigable.

ABE.

(*With conviction.*) 'Course she could be, Mr. Graham. She's jest like an unruly child. She's gotta be took in hand and straightened out and be made t' keep in bounds. And then, we need railroads like they got back east, so's transportation 'll be speeded up to mebbe twenty miles an hour.

MENTOR.

(*Laughing.*) I don't think we'll ever see the day when anything will go *that* fast.

ABE.

(*Firmly.*) Yes, we will, too. They might even git up to *twenty-five* miles an hour. A man's gotta have—gotta have —— (*Pauses and ponders.*) I know what I wanta say but I don't know the *word* t' say it with.

MENTOR.

Vision?

ABE.

That's it! A man's gotta have vision. He's gotta look ahead. (*Stares into space.*) That trip I made down the river to N'Orleans opened my eyes t' lotsa things. I seen, with my own eyes, so many things that was *wrong* that I'd like t' help make *right.*

MENTOR.

For instance?

ABE.

(*Rises to his full height.*) All men—all human bein's

has gotta be made free, Mr. Graham. (*Clenches his fist.*) No man has any right t' own—t' buy and sell—another man, no matter what his color happens t' be. (*Paces to* R. *deep in thought.*)

MENTOR.

You're speaking about the slaves, of course.

ABE.

(*Coming back to* L. C.) That's *exactly* what I'm speakin' about, Mr. Graham. (*Sits in easy chair.*) In N'Orleans, I seen negroes in chains—whipped till their black flesh was red with blood. I seen children bein' took away from their parents and sold—young gals put up on the auction block and bein' pinched and mauled over by the bidders like they was so much horse flesh. I seen *all* this —and many things much worse that I even hate t' think about. It made my blood run cold in my veins. (*Rises with fury.*) If I ever git a chance t' hit at slavery, I'll hit it *hard!* (*Paces to* R., *indignantly.*)

MENTOR.

I doubt very much if anybody could ever do anything about the slave question. Why, the whole prosperity of the south depends on slave-labor.

ABE.

(*Turning back to him.*) They ain't got it in the north and that's prosperous.

MENTOR.

They tell me that in some of those factory towns up in New England they ring a bell at break of day; the workers report at the factory fifteen minutes later and the gates are closed. Two hours later, twenty-five minutes is allowed for breakfast and at noon twenty-five minutes for dinner. The gates aren't opened until eight at night which leaves them only eight or nine hours to refresh themselves and to improve their minds and bodies. What is *that* but slavery?

ABE.

(*Tensely.*) But they're *free*—their bodies don't belong

to another man. (*Pacing from* L. *to* R.) In them eight or nine hours they're their own masters. And if they work too many hours a day, that's the workers' fault. It's up t' them t' git together, fer in union there is strength. (*Pauses and faces* MENTOR.) Them are some of the things I'd like t' git at through the government. (*Sits in easy chair* L. C.) But I got so much to larn fust. That's why I wanta study and study and *study*. And I want ya t' help me, Mr. Graham.

MENTOR.

I'll do all I can, Abe.

ABE.

We'll start right in on my grammar as soon as I git back from Vaner's with that grammar book tonight.

MENTOR.

Why, you won't get back from there till all hours, Abe; long after folks are in bed.

ABE.

Time don't make no diff'rence when there's important work t' be done. I gotta git a eddication. My ma—her that was Nancy Hanks—used t' say t' me: "Abe, you go t' school and larn all ya kin." (*Firmly.*) And I mean t' *do* it!

MENTOR.

And I'll help you all I can, Abe.

ABE.

(*Rising, elatedly.*) Oh, thank ya, Mr. Graham. I *knowed* ya would. Ya see, my pap—him that's Tom Lincoln—don't believe much in eddication. He thinks when ya larn readin', writin' 'n' cipherin' that's a-plenty. He hates books. (*Goes to* R.)

MENTOR.

Books are like lighted lamps in a dark and gloomy world.

ABE.

(*Sits on stool* R.) Well, now, that's the way I always

figgered, Mr. Graham, but not Pap. He used t' git awful mad when the neighbors'd come in t' have me write their letters fer 'em. He said I was gittin' too big fer my britches. (*Smiles.*)

MENTOR.

But, just the same, I'll bet he was mighty proud of you —down deep in his heart.

ABE.

Ya never would a-knowed it from Pap's actions. He used t' slap me off'n the top of a fence if he caught me askin' folks questions 'bout things I wanted t' know. He said I could pump a man dryer'n a desert. (*Laughs.*)

MENTOR.

(*Thoughtfully.*) Drinking at the fount of knowledge.

ABE.

But without Pap a-knowin' it, I managed t' git holt of all the books I could and I'd lay up there in the loft readin' long after th' others had gone t' bed. Pap'd said I was wastin' tallow.

(*They laugh.*)

MENTOR.

Did you ever read any Shakespeare?

ABE.

(*Rises and comes to* C.) No, but I've heerd o' that feller's book and I'm mighty anxious t' git holt of it. (*Eagerly.*) Have ya got it?

MENTOR.

No, but if you meet Jack Kelso, you won't have to have the book.

ABE.

Jack Kelso? Who's he?

MENTOR.

Kind of a vagabond who's come to New Salem. Why,

say! he's got every bit of Shakespeare right on the end of his tongue.

ABE.

(*Determinedly.*) Then I gotta know that feller right away. Where kin he be found?

MENTOR.

Usually down by the river fishing.

ABE.

Well, now, I hate fishin' but I'll set and fish all night if this Kelso feller 'll larn me Shakespeare. (*Eagerly, he starts to* R.) Let's go find him right now.

MENTOR.

(*Rising.*) You can't go away and leave the store!

ABE.

(*Stops at door* R.) Well, now, I forgot all about that. (*Laughs.*) I always fergit about *everything* when there's somethin' to be larnt. That's why Pap always said I'd never amount t' much. (*Dejectedly.*) And I guess mebbe he's 'bout right. (*Comes back to* C.)

MENTOR.

(*Going to him and putting hand on his shoulder.*) No, he's not. You're going to be a fine man, Abe. Maybe—who knows?—you might even be a *great* man.

ABE.

(*Shyly.*) Well, now, Mr. Graham, I hardly think so. (*Quickly.*) But it's powerful fine fer you t' have so much confidence in me.

MENTOR.

We're going to work together until you've pumped *me* dry on every subject I know. And we'll begin this very night. I don't care how late it is when you get back from Vaner's with that grammar. I don't care if it's as late as nine o'clock.

ABE.

Mebbe if I was to run all the ways and back, I might

make it *afore* nine. (*They laugh. Off stage* R. *girlish laughter and giggling are heard.* ABE *listens.*) What's that?

MENTOR.

Customers, maybe.

ABE.

(*Frightened.*) Sounds like gals. (*Increased laughter.*) And a *flock* o' them. (*Runs back of* R. *end of counter, quickly.*) I hope they ain't comin' in here.

MENTOR.

(*Going up to counter at* L. *of* ABE.) Are you afraid of girls?

ABE.

(*Behind counter at* C.) Well, now, I don't 'zactly mind *one* at a time, but a whole passel of 'em gits me t' runnin' hot 'n' cold at the same time.

(MENTOR *laughs as* BETSY CAMERON, LOU CAMERON *and* MARY CAMERON *enter* R. *They are young girls in their teens, pretty and personable. They wear summer dresses of that period made of bright calico or muslin. These dresses have tight-fitting bodices, full, gathered skirts, large puffed sleeves and fichus around the neck pinned at the waist line. Small bonnets are worn on the back of the head and they are tied under the chin with streamers. The girls pause inside door, look at* ABE, *then turn to each other and giggle, softly.*)

LOU.

(*To the other girls in a loud whisper.*) He isn't much to look at, is he?

(MENTOR *goes to stove* L., *his back to the girls.*)

MARY.

Gracious, no! He's so tall and skinny.

LOU.

A regular bean pole.

(ABE *tries to busy himself arranging the shelves, peering over his shoulder at them.*)

BETSY.

Father said he was very nice.

MARY.

He'd *have* to be because he's so homely.

(*They all giggle.*)

BETSY.

(*Looking around.*) Where's Ann and Margaret?

LOU.

Hanging around outside. They're afraid to come in.

MARY.

Ann Rutledge always was the shy one with boys.

LOU.

Oh, I don't know! She's kind of sweet on John McNeil.

BETSY.

Yes, I wouldn't be surprised but that they're engaged.

LOU and MARY.

(*Amazed.*) Really?

BETSY.

Uh huh! I wouldn't be surprised, I wouldn't, 'cause I saw him take hold of her hand once.

(*The others show shocked surprise.*)

LOU.

That's almost a sure sign of an engagement.

(*The other two nod assent.*)

MARY.

Well, call them in. Maybe it won't seem so bold if five of us talk to young Mr. Lincoln at once.

LOU.

That's right. (*Goes to door* R. *and calls out.*) Margaret! Ann! Come on in. Everything's all right.

(*There is a slight pause and* MARGARET *and* ANN RUTLEDGE *enter* R. ANN *is eighteen.* MARGARET *is older. They are dressed in about the same fashion as the* CAMERON *girls.* ANN *should be the frail, delicate type of beauty as contrast to* ABE'S *ruggedness.*)

MARGARET.

(*Stiffly.*) I don't quite approve of talking to a strange young man without an introduction. What would Father say?

LOU.

He doesn't need to know anything about it. Besides, we can come to a public store to buy if we choose.

ANN.

But what are we going to *buy?*

MARY.

Oh, just *anything.*

ANN.

Has anybody got any money?

(*All search quickly through their reticules and are dismayed at finding them empty. They look at each other.*)

BETSY.

Not a penny in the crowd.

(*Occasionally,* MENTOR *slyly glances around at them with a smile.*)

MARGARET.

Then we haven't got an excuse for talking to him so we'd better go. (*Starts to door* R.)

ANN.

Wait a minute! I have an idea! (*Points to* L.)

There's Mr. Graham, the schoolmaster. He can introduce us and then all will be quite proper.

THE OTHERS.

(*Elatedly.*) Oh, yes! That's right! How nice! (*Etc.*)

ANN.

(*Venturing to* c. *and speaking timidly.*) Oh, Mr. Graham!

MENTOR.

(*Turns and comes to her.*) Oh, how do you do, Miss Ann!

(ABE *turns from his supposed work and stares at* ANN.)

ANN.

(*Fumbling.*) I—could you—that is—should you—I mean—would you ——?

MENTOR.

(*Smiling.*) Yes, Miss Ann!

ANN.

Well, you see —— (*Looks at the other girls for help.*)

LOU.

(*Coming forward to* MENTOR.) What Ann is trying to say is—we thought we might buy something but we find we have no money.

MENTOR.

And you'd like to have some credit extended you? Is that right?

LOU.

(*Hesitatingly.*) Well—not exactly. (*Quickly.*) But could you introduce us to the new clerk so in case we ever *want* credit?

THE OTHER GIRLS.

(*Nodding.*) Yes! That's it!

MENTOR.

(*Laughingly.*) Why, certainly. (*Goes up to counter*

at L. *of* ABE, *who is still trying to busy himself.*) Oh, Abe!

(*The girls are at* R., ANN *being nearest to* ABE *at* R. C.)

ABE.

(*Turns, sees the girls staring at him and swallows hard.*) Yes, sir!

MENTOR.

I want to introduce you to some of the young ladies of New Salem. Miss Betsy Cameron, Miss Lou Cameron and Miss Mary Cameron. They're the daughters of the Reverend John Cameron. (*He indicates them as he mentions their names.*)

BETSY.

This isn't our whole family. There're more of us at home. (*Giggles. The other girls silence her with a look.*)

MENTOR.

(*Indicating* ANN *and* MARGARET.) And these two young ladies are Miss Margaret and Miss Ann Rutledge. Ladies, this is Mr. Abraham Lincoln.

THE GIRLS.

(*All make a slight curtsey.*) How do you do, Mr. Lincoln?

ABE.

(*Nervously.*) Howdy! (*There is an awkward pause.*) Kin I sell you ladies anything?

ANN.

(*Shyly.*) Why—no—you see ——

ABE.

We keep most anything ya might want.

MARY.

But we haven't any money.

ABE.

Well, now, I reckon yer credit would be good, seein' that ye're the daughters of the Reverend.

LOU.

We thought we'd just come over and look around.

THE OTHER GIRLS.

(*Quickly.*) Yes, that's right. Of course. Uh huh. (*Etc., etc.*)

ABE.

Well, now, ya kin help yerself. (*There is another awkward pause. The girls stand still and stare at him and* ABE *shifts from one foot to another, nervously.* MENTOR *is amused. Finally,* ABE *breaks the silence.*) If there's anything I kin show ya, I'd ——

THE GIRLS.

Oh, no! Not at all! (*Etc.*)

BETSY.

We just wanted to—to—*look.* (*Giggles, foolishly.*)

(*There is another pause. Finally,* ANN *speaks.*)

ANN.

Is this your first visit to New Salem, Mr. Lincoln?

ABE.

Well, not 'zactly. Ya see, I was here last spring—that is—I wasn't 'zactly in New Salem. I was stuck on the dam in a flatboat.

LOU.

Are you the man who got that boat safely over Father's dam?

ABE.

Well, now, I reckon I'm the same feller.

ANN.

(*Going up closer to* ABE.) I thought I'd seen you somewhere before. It was wonderful the way you got

that boat over the dam without breaking it to pieces. Father said it showed a lot of courage and common sense.

ABE.

Well, now, I reckon courage and common sense is two purty good things t' have.

ANN.

(*Shyly.*) Yes, that's right.

(*All laugh but* MARGARET.)

MARGARET.

(*Going to* ANN *and taking her by the arm.*) Ann! I think we'd better be getting home.

ABE.

(*Looking at* ANN.) Well, now, ya don't need t' be in sech a hurry—now that we've got acquainted.

MARGARET.

(*Stiffly.*) I don't think it's quite proper standing here talking so long to a strange young man.

ABE.

Well, now, I don't see nothin' wrong 'bout that. This here's a public store and anybody kin come in that has a mind to. 'Sides, here's Mr. Graham t' kinda chaperony us.

(*All laugh but* MARGARET.)

MENTOR.

That's right, Abe.

ANN.

You must come over to see us, Mr. Lincoln. Father runs the tavern.

ABE.

Got any books over there?

ANN.

Several.

ABE.

(*Grinning.*) Then I *know* I'll be over.

MARY.

(*Quickly.*) We've got some at our house, too.

ABE.

Yer pap has already give me a invite t' visit ya, and I'll be over one o' these nights t' borrow them books.

MENTOR.

Abe is quite a student. He's going to study with me.

LOU.

(*Eagerly.*) I teach reading and writing to my younger sisters. Maybe I could teach you, Mr. Lincoln?

ABE.

Well, now, I kin already read considerable and as fer writin', I kin make purty good rabbit tracks. (*All laugh as he turns his eyes to* ANN.) Mebbe *you* kin larn—I mean—*teach* me somethin', Miss Ann.

MARGARET.

(*Shaking* ANN *by the arm.*) Ann, come! We'd better go!

ANN.

Just a minute, sister Margaret. (*To* ABE.) Maybe you'd like to join our literary and debating society, Mr. Lincoln? Father is president of the society.

ABE.

Well, now, that sounds purty good.

MENTOR.

I was going to propose you for membership, Abe.

ABE.

What's the purpose of the society?

ANN.

It's for educated people who wish to advance themselves.

ABE.

Well, now, I ain't eddicated but I'd sure like to advance. (*All laugh.*) I remember oncet, back in Indiany, we had a dee-bate about which come fust, the chicken or the egg.

MARGARET.

(*Stiffly.*) That doesn't sound quite proper to me.

BETSY.

I should think that would have been very interesting.

MARY.

Yes, indeed! Which did you decide came first, Mr. Lincoln?

ABE.

Well, now, some said there couldn't be no chicken 'less there was a egg fust—and others said there couldn't be no egg 'less there was a chicken fust—so the upshot of the dee-bate was that I said mebbe they both come together at the same time and then decided t' go into a business partnership and work fer each other's interests.

(*All laugh but* MARGARET *who shows disapproval.*)

MARGARET.

(*Going to door* R.) Ann! We're leaving immediately.

ANN.

(*Meekly.*) Yes, sister Margaret. (*To* ABE.) Good-bye, Mr. Lincoln.

ABE.

Good-bye, Miss Ann. And jest call me Abe. Everybody does.

ANN.

Thank you—Abe! (*Smiles at him.*)

MARGARET.

(*Calling, loudly.*) Ann!

ANN.

(*Joining her at door* R.) Yes, sister Margaret.

BETSY.

(*Going up to* ABE.) We've been dealing at the Herndon store but the next time I'm sent for something, I'll come here—Abe!

ABE.

Well, now, that's right kind of ya, Miss Cameron.

(*She looks at* ABE *and giggles.* LOU *and* MARY *grab her and hustle her to* R., *disapprovingly.*)

LOU and MARY.

Betsy!

THE GIRLS.

(*In unison.*) Good-bye, Mr. Graham. Good-bye, Mr. Lincoln.

ABE and MENTOR.

Good-bye. [*The girls file out door* R.

(ANN *remains above door and after the others have gone she is still on stage.* MENTOR *sits in easy chair* L. C.)

ANN.

Don't forget—Abe—we shall expect you at the next meeting of our society.

ABE.

I'll be there, Miss Ann.

ANN.

Just call me Ann. Everybody does.

ABE.

(*Gulping and fidgeting.*) Thank ya—Ann.

ANN.

(*Lingering at door.*) Good-bye.

ABE.

Oh, wait a minute. (*Leaps over counter to cracker box.*) Have a cracker? (*Takes whole box to her.*)

ANN.

(*Laughing and taking cracker.*) Oh, thank you.

ABE.

Mr. Offut said no one was t' take one without payin'—but this here's my *treat.*

ANN.

You're very kind, Abe, and thank you.

(MARGARET *enters* R., *hurriedly.*)

MARGARET.

(*Taking her by the arm.*) Ann Rutledge, will you come on? What would John McNeil say?

ANN.

(*Petulantly.*) I don't care. (*Looking back at* ABE *as* MARGARET *takes her off* R.) Good-bye—Abe!

(ABE *stares at her still holding cracker box.*)

ABE.

It could never happen that a sucker like me could ever have a gal like her. (*The box falls from his hands to the floor with a crash. Apparently he never notices it as he still stares after her with outstretched hands that held the box.*)

(MENTOR *looks over his glasses and smiles, knowingly.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

SCENE 1.—*Same as* ACT I.

TIME.—*One year later. 1832.*

(*At rise of curtain: The set is the same except that the stock of goods on the shelves has decreased and some of the shelves are almost empty.* DENTON, *dressed as formerly, is seated in easy chair* L. C. *asleep. After a snore or two,* ARMSTRONG *enters* R., *hurriedly. He, too, is dressed as in* ACT I.)

ARMSTRONG.

(*As he enters.*) Hey! Whar's Lincoln? (*Sees* DENTON *asleep.*) Hey! Offut! (DENTON *does not stir.* ARMSTRONG *comes to him and yells.*) Offut! Denton Offut! (DENTON *remains asleep.* ARMSTRONG *looks worried.*) He must be dead. (DENTON *snores.*) No! Dead men don't make them turrible noises. (*Shakes* DENTON.) Hey! Wake up!

(DENTON *stirs, opens his eyes and looks up.*)

DENTON.

Whatcha want?

ARMSTRONG.

I want Lincoln.

DENTON.

(*Rubs his eyes and looks around.*) That's funny! I was jest dreamin' that *lotsa* folks wanted Lincoln. I was in Washington, D. C., when ya woke me up.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Laughs.*) Well, now ye're back in New Salem.

DENTON.

(*Pondering.*) Where ev'rybody wants Lincoln, too. (*Rises.*)

ARMSTRONG.

Jest now, I want him ter referee a rasslin' match fer us. He's the only one that ever makes a fair 'n' square *dee-cee-sion.*

DENTON.

Yes, sir, Abe's a honest feller all right. I've found that out in the year he's been workin' fer me.

ARMSTRONG.

It's gittin' so that the Clary Grove Boys always calls on him ter settle all their disputes. "Honest Abe," they calls him. (*Laughs, boisterously.*) Whar be Lincoln? Is he around? (*Looks around store.*)

DENTON.

Not jest now. Said he hadda go somewheres on important business.

ARMSTRONG.

Never seen a feller that has so much business ter 'tend to.

DENTON.

Folks come in here ter git Abe to write letters fer 'em—read books to 'em—ask his advice 'bout law 'n' order 'n' politics—ev'rything 'ceptin' to buy goods. And when we *do* git a customer, he won't charge one penny more'n it's wuth. Says it hain't honest.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Thoughtfully.*) Reckon he's right, too.

DENTON.

(*Looking at him in amazement.*) Ye're a fine one ter be talkin' 'bout honesty. Why, you and them Clary Grove Boys is the biggest scalawags in these here parts.

ARMSTRONG.

I reckon we was till Lincoln come here, but he's kinda changed that. Why, we ain't done no stealin' fer all of two months. And we never drink no hard licker when Lincoln's around, 'cause *he* don't drink. And seein' as

how he's around most of the time, we've kinda cut out the licker-drinkin'.

(CAMERON *enters door* R. *He is dressed as in* ACT I.)

DENTON.

When Abe Lincoln kin have that much influence over a bunch o' fellers like you, think what he'll be able ter do fer the state of Illinois when he's 'lected to the legislature.

CAMERON.

(*Coming to* R. C.) I doubt very much if Abe will win that election.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Turning to him, defiantly.*) I don't see what's gonna *stop* him! He's the strongest man in Sangamon County.

CAMERON.

Mere strength doesn't put a man in the legislature.

DENTON.

He's got the *brains,* too. Or mebbe brains don't count in politics.

CAMERON.

But he's a Henry Clay man and right now in Illinois politics the large majority of voters are Jackson men. And the majority rules.

DENTON.

Why, I jest had a dream that Abe was in Washington and that the majority wanted him.

CAMERON.

There's no accounting for dreams. They always go by contrary.

DENTON.

(*Walks to* L., *disgustedly.*) And so do *you,* Reverend.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Same tone.*) I've never knowed ya to agree with anybody yit.

CAMERON.

(*Annoyed.*) I have the courage of my convictions. (*Quickly.*) Now, mind you, I like Abe Lincoln. I think he's a fine, upstanding young man and all that—*but* ——

DENTON.

I knowed there'd have t' be a *but* in it.

CAMERON.

(*Ignoring this remark.*) But he hasn't had enough education to qualify as a representative to the state legislature.

DENTON.

(*Coming to* CAMERON *at* R.) Eddication? Why, in the past year Abe's read ev'ry book within twenty-five miles of New Salem. If that ain't eddication, I don't know what *is!*

ARMSTRONG.

And he kin do things them Demycrats can't do. Didn't he pilot the steamboat, the *Talisman,* from Cincinnati all the way ter New Salem?

DENTON.

(*Looking at* CAMERON, *defiantly.*) And only one year ago you said it couldn't be done. (*Proudly.*) But Abe Lincoln done it, in spite of fogs, rain and floatin' ice-jams jest last March.

CAMERON.

Yes, but they had to tear a hole in the Cameron and Rutledge dam to get the *Talisman* back downstream again.

DENTON.

I don't keer how it was done—the p'int is—the *Talisman* got up the Sangamon and back agin—jest like Abe said it would.

CAMERON.

(*Stubbornly.*) But successfully piloting a steamboat doesn't qualify a man for the legislature.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Going to* CAMERON.) What about the Black Hawk War? As soon as old Black Hawk went on the warpath, what'd Lincoln do? Why, he enlisted and he got me 'n' all the Clary Grove Boys t' enlist, too. And then what'd *we* do? Why, we 'lected him cap'n.

DENTON.

You shoulda made him genril.

ARMSTRONG.

And after he was cap'n, what'd *he* do? Why, he made me first sergeant. (*Hits his chest with pride.*) And all the rest of the Clary Grove Boys he made corp'rals. (*Proudly.*) *That's* what he done!

DENTON.

And he come all through that Black Hawk War without killin' one Injine.

CAMERON.

Very creditable, I'm sure, but all this is not politics. (*Sits on stool* R.)

DENTON.

Mr. Rutledge wants him ter run fer office. Abe tole me so.

CAMERON.

I doubt that very much.

DENTON.

Reverend, I don't mean no disrespect, but I don't see how you ever could be a preacher.

CAMERON.

Why?

DENTON.

It's a wonder ya don't doubt what's wrote out in the Bible.

(ARMSTRONG *and* DENTON *laugh, loudly.* CAMERON *is much annoyed.*)

CAMERON.

We won't bring religion into politics.

ARMSTRONG.

Well, all I kin say is, if Lincoln wants ter git inter politics, the Clary Grove Boys is back of him t' the limit.

(ABE *enters* R. *He is dressed about as in* ACT I, *except that his shirt may be better and cleaner and his trousers neater. His English, too, has improved and he carefully corrects himself when he makes a mistake.*)

ABE.

(*Seeing* CAMERON.) Howdy, Reverend!

CAMERON.

Good morning, Abe.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Proudly.*) Howdy, Cap'n. (*Salutes.*)

ABE.

(*Saluting.*) Howdy, Sergeant. (*They laugh as* ABE *goes between* ARMSTRONG *and* CAMERON.) Right warm walkin' cross country in the sun. (*Wipes brow with sleeve.*)

DENTON.

Where ya been, Abe?

ABE.

Mrs. Simmons, who lives six miles out in the country, was in here last night for half-pound o' tea and afore I closed up last night I happened to notice that I had a four-ounce weight on the scales instead of a eight-ounce. So I just tuk—took—her over another quarter-pound.

DENTON.

You walked twelve miles jest fer *that?*

ABE.

Why not? I'd cheated her and I wanted to make it right.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Pointing to him with pride.*) Honest Abe.

ABE.

Honesty is the best policy.

CAMERON.

(*Smilingly.*) That's right, Abe. I agree with you.

DENTON.

I'm glad you agree about *somethin'*, Reverend. (*Goes to box down* L. *and sits.*)

ABE.

Has the Reverend Cameron been disagreein' about somethin'?

ARMSTRONG.

He's been sayin' ya ain't got a chance ter git 'lected fer the legislayter. But Offut 'n' me said diff'rent.

ABE.

(*Smiling.*) Thanks fer—for—your confidence in me, boys, but I wouldn't be too *sure.* You know I ain't a Democrat.

CAMERON.

And they're in the majority.

ARMSTRONG.

I was jest wonderin', Cap'n Lincoln, seein' as how me 'n' the Clary Grove Boys around here is the majority, if the majority couldn't git t'gether and *lick* the majority. (*Hauls off in a fighting pose.*)

ABE.

Ya mean—git—*get* votes for me by force?

ARMSTRONG.

(*Laughing.*) Well, a good strong fist is a powerful persuader. (*Holds up his fist.*)

ABE.

Well, now, I wouldn't want ya to do anything like

that, Sergeant. If I win the election, I wanta win fair and square. But I don't think I'll win.

ARMSTRONG and DENTON.

(*Assuringly.*) Sure, ya'll win. 'Course ya will. (*Etc.*)

CAMERON.

(*Rises.*) What ever gave you the idea you *could* win?

ABE.

Well, now, it wasn't wholly *my* idee. Mr. James Rutledge, Miss Ann's pap, kinda urged me to do it.

DENTON.

(*Rising.*) What'd I tell ya, Reverend?

CAMERON.

And what gave Mr. Rutledge the idea that you were fitted for such a position?

ABE.

Well, now, he didn't say nothin' about my bein' *fitted* fer—for—the job. He just said it would bring me prominently before the people and in time would do me good.

CAMERON.

And do you think you are qualified for a member of the legislature?

ABE.

Well, now, I don't know exactly. But from some of the laws that's made up to the state capitol, it 'pears to me like some of them lawmakers leave their brains outside with their hoss and buggy.

(*All laugh but* CAMERON.)

ARMSTRONG.

(*Laughing, heartily.*) That's a good 'un, Cap'n.

DENTON.

Abe might not have as much eddication as some o' them candidates, but he's got more brains.

ABE.

Well, now, I don't know 'bout *that,* but I know I would take what brains I got inside the state house with me and I'd try to use 'em. If I'm elected, I'll be thankful, but if I ain't, it'll be all the same. Life is just like a lot o' doors that open and shut. There's no tellin' beforehand which door is to be shut with a "No! No!" and which door is to swing open with a welcome. And you gotta be prepared for both doors.

CAMERON.

Well, I'm glad you're prepared, Abe. Personally, I'm a staunch Democrat.

ABE.

(*Grinning.*) Well, now, everybody to his own taste—as the old lady said when she kissed the cow.

(*All roar with laughter but* CAMERON.)

CAMERON.

(*Going to door* R., *furiously.*) I see there's no sense talking politics *here.* (*Turns at door and points to* ABE *with his cane.*) But you'll find out on election day.

[*Exits* R., *quickly.*

ARMSTRONG.

(*Going to door* R. *and calling after him.*) Yes siree, ya'll find a lot o' Demycrats that have became Whigs all of a sudden. (*Shakes his fist, threateningly.*)

ABE.

(*Going to him and putting hand on* ARMSTRONG'S *shoulder.*) Remember, Sergeant Armstrong, no strong-arm methods.

ARMSTRONG.

Jest as you say, Cap'n Lincoln, but remember, the Clary Grove Boys is always back o' ya.

(DENTON *goes back of counter at* L., *gets a corncob pipe and lights it.*)

ABE.

Thank ya, Sergeant.

(*They shake hands.*)

ARMSTRONG.

And now will ya do me a favor?

ABE.

Anything ya say, Sergeant.

ARMSTRONG.

We're havin' a rasslin' match t'night between me 'n' one o' the men across the river and we want you ter referee.

ABE.

I'll be glad to referee. But remember, it's gotta be fair 'n' square. No bitin' or kickin'. And no hard licker drunk aforehand.

ARMSTRONG.

Nary a drop. It's at sundown in that field by Rutledges'.

ABE.

That'll suit me fine, 'cause I got a special appointment at Rutledges' soon after.

(*All laugh.*)

DENTON.

(*Coming down* L.) With Miss Ann?

ABE.

Well, it ain't with Miss Margaret—I kin promise ya *that.*

(*All laugh.*)

ARMSTRONG.

At sundown, Cap'n Lincoln.

ABE.

At sundown, Sergeant Armstrong. (*They salute each other.* ARMSTRONG *laughs and exits* R.) Purty nice

feller, Armstrong, after ya git—get—under that tough hide of his. (*Comes to* C. *as* DENTON *sits on box down* L.) Ya know, Mr. Offut, ya never realize the true worth of a man till ya learn to overlook his faults.

DENTON.

(*Puffing on pipe, preoccupied.*) Yes, I reckon so.

ABE.

Did ya order them new goods, Mr. Offut?

DENTON.

Set down, Abe. I wanta talk to ya.

(ABE *sits in easy chair* L. C.)

ABE.

What's worryin' ya?

DENTON.

Ya know I ain't been able to pay you no wages fer a couple o' months, Abe.

ABE.

(*Laughing.*) Well, now, I've been too busy studyin' grammar 'n' readin' books with Mr. Graham to notice. So if that's all that's worryin' ya, just ferget it.

DENTON.

The day ya come t' work here, I bragged t' Reverend Cameron that if anybody'd make this store go, it'd be you.

ABE.

(*Quietly.*) Well, now, Mr. Offut, I'm sorry I ain't lived up to your confidence in me.

DENTON.

(*Apologetically.*) Mind, I ain't blamin' *you*, Abe. You've done all ya kin do. But thar's too many stores in New Salem. There's five and three of 'em is about to go under, includin' mine.

ABE.

(*Rising.*) Ya don't mean you're gonna close up this store?

DENTON.

(*Sadly.*) I've gotta, Abe. I ain't got no more money and I ain't got no more credit ter buy goods with. As the folks here say: "Offut is peterin' out."

ABE.

Maybe if we could collect some of the money that's owin' ya. (*Sits again.*)

DENTON.

Can't be done. There ain't much money in these here parts, 'ceptin' wildcat money.

ABE.

That's right. And them that's got money won't pay the high prices we've gotta charge for things on account of the cost of transportation. (*Rises and speaks with force.*) If I could get elected, I might put through that bill to have the Sangamon River made navigable and to build a railroad through to New Salem.

DENTON.

Why, I've heerd that such a railroad would cost two hundred and ninety thousand dollars.

ABE.

That's right. But it could be done. (*Hitting fist in palm of hand.*) I *know* it could be done.

DENTON.

If *you* say so, Abe, I reckon it *could* be. That's why I thought that mebbe if you had this store on yer own, ya might make a go of it.

ABE.

(*Going to him.*) Ya mean, ya want me to *buy* this store?

DENTON.

That's what I was figgerin' on. Ya could let what wages I owe ya go on part payment.

ABE.

But where'd I get the rest o' the money?

DENTON.

I'll take yer note fer it. And ya might git a partner. There's William F. Berry, the preacher's son. You 'n' him is good friends. He might go inter partnership with ya and ya might buy up the other two stores that's goin' on the rocks and make it inter one *big* store.

ABE.

(*Walks to* R., *pondering.*) Well, now, that's worth considerin'. If I don't win the election and you go outta business, I'll have to do *somethin',* so why not go into business for myself?

DENTON.

(*Rising, elatedly.*) Then ya'll do it?

ABE.

(*Coming back to him.*) Well, now, I'll have to think it over. As Jack Kelso would say: "Tread wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast." That's Shakespeare.

DENTON.

(*Disgustedly.*) Kelso's full o' wind, if ya ask me.

ABE.

No, he's full o' Shakespeare. (*Laughs.*)

DENTON.

Kelso's crazy.

ABE.

"His speech is like a tangled chain. Nothin' impaired but all disordered." That's Shakespeare, too. It's from that dream he had on a midsummer's night.

DENTON.

(*Impatiently.*) What's all this gotta do with buyin' out a store? Is yer answer yes or no?

(JACK KELSO *enters door* R. *and stands in doorway. He is a tall, youngish-looking man in his thirties. His manner and speech are romantic, poetic, flowery and beautiful. When he talks, he makes sweeping gestures with his graceful hands in the manner of a Shakespearian actor of the "old school." He wears a costume similar to that of* CAMERON'S *only the clothes are older and "seedier." His stovepipe hat is slightly dented and his vest and flowing tie are of bright colors and gaudy pattern.*)

ABE.

Well, now, I'll have to talk it over with Ann. She seems to know about everything there is to know.

DENTON.

Ya mean Ann Rutledge?

ABE.

'Course I mean Ann Rutledge. (*Ponders, looking into space.*) That's a purty name, ain't it? (*Repeats it to himself, softly.*) Ann Rutledge!

JACK.

(*Coming to* R. C.) "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Romeo and Juliet.

ABE.

(*Turning and seeing him.*) Jack Kelso! (*Goes to him and they shake hands, warmly.*) Where've ya been all day?

JACK.

Down by yonder cool stream trying to ensnare a few unsuspecting members of the finny family with enticing bait.

ABE.

In other words, you've been fishin'. (*They laugh.*) Any luck?

JACK.

The bait failed to entice them into being ensnared.

DENTON.

(*Disgustedly.*) Don't you ever talk no common-sense talk?

JACK.

(*Coming to* C. *between* ABE *and* DENTON.) I speak the speech of the immortal Bard; trippingly on the tongue. I do not mouth it, as many players do. That's part of Hamlet's advice to the play-actors.

DENTON.

But you ain't no play-actor!

JACK.

My friend! "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts." As You Like It.

DENTON.

But I don't *like* it. (*Goes to door down* L.) And I'm leavin'.

JACK.

(DENTON *grunts, disapprovingly.* JACK *gestures from one to the other.*) "When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain? When the hurlyburly's done, when the battle's lost and won?" Macbeth.

DENTON.

Ye're crazy—just plum *crazy!* [*Exits down* L.

ABE.

Mr. Offut don't really *mean* that, Jack. He just don't understand Shakespeare.

JACK.

Pray! reserve your apologies. The Bard hath written: "Take each man's censure but reserve thy judgement."

ABE.

(*Thoughtfully.*) Well, now, that's somethin' worth remember in'.

JACK.

Shakespeare was a wise and witty man. He was like you, Abraham, "a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy."

ABE.

(*Shyly.*) Well, now, I wouldn't go so far as to say *that.*

(*They laugh.*)

JACK.

(*Going down* L. *and perching on top of a barrel.*) Mark ye and mark ye well, my long-legged friend, you are destined for great things. The mark of greatness is upon you.

ABE.

(*Looks himself over from head to foot.*) Well, now, I ain't able to see it if it is.

JACK.

It is an imperceptible something, unseen except by those who have the vision to see through the fabric of dreams.

ABE.

(*Eagerly.*) Ya mean, ya think I'm gonna get elected to the legislature? (*Sits on box by* JACK.)

JACK.

My friend, the noblest Roman of them all, (*pats* ABE *on head*) that little episode will be as the casting of a tiny pebble into a mighty stream. So insignificant will be the ripple that you will scarce remember it. But one day, that same mighty stream will engulf you and sweep you onward to the great ocean of achievement.

ABE.

(*Puzzled.*) I swear I don't know what you're talkin' about.

JACK.

(*Laughing.*) I speak in the language of dreams, and "a dream itself is but a shadow." Yet coming events cast their shadows before them.

ABE.

(*Rising and going to* C.) I hate to agree with Mr. Offut, but sometimes, I declare, you *do* talk a little mite crazy.

JACK.

(*Airily.*) "If this be madness, there is method in it."

ABE.

(*Turning to him.*) Well, now, it's mighty nice o' you to have all this confidence in me, but I'm afeerd—afraid—I ain't never gonna be *great.* I wouldn't mind bein' a good lawyer. I've been readin' all the lawbooks I could get hold of. (*Sitting in easy chair* L. C.) You see, if I get to know the laws right well, I might be able to figger out what's *right* about 'em and what's *wrong* about 'em.

JACK.

Justice is rarely weighed in evenly balanced scales.

ABE.

Is there any justice in a man bein' a slave, even though his skin is *black?*

JACK.

"O, judgement, thou art fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason! Bear with me."

ABE.

(*Rises.*) I'd give anything in this world, even to my last drop o' blood, if I could rid the country of the curse of slavery.

JACK.

"And you are come in happy time to bear thy greeting to the senators."

ABE.

What's the matter with the laws of a country that allows such a condition to exist? (*Paces the floor to* R.)

JACK.

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."

ABE.

(*Coming back to* C.) But this ain't Denmark. It's the United States of America where all men should and *must* be free.

JACK.

(*Rises and recites in a solemn tone.*)

"To be or not to be—that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them."

(*To* ABE *who is listening, intently.*) That was the dilemma in Hamlet's mind.

(ANN *enters door* R. *She wears a dainty muslin or calico frock with bonnet. She carries a small basket on her arm.*)

ABE.

(*In a fiery tone.*) If I ever get a crack at the injustices, I'll ——

ANN.

(*Coming forward.*) Practising a campaign speech, Abe?

ABE.

(*Turning and seeing her, he is surprised.*) Ann! I didn't hear ya come in.

JACK.

Through the door like a zephyr of springtime she came and for the first time mine eyes beheld beauty.

ANN.

(*Laughing, shyly.*) Oh, Mr. Kelso!

ABE.

(*Looking at* ANN.) I'd give anything in the world if I could talk like that.

JACK.

"Give every man thine ear but few thy voice." (*Laughingly, he crosses by* ABE *and* ANN *to* R.) And now, I must away.

ANN.

(*Protestingly.*) Oh, *please* don't go on my account, Mr. Kelso, I *beg* of you.

JACK.

(*Turning at door* R.) "The lady doth protest too much, me thinks." (*Laughs.*)

(ANN *looks at* ABE *with embarrassment.*)

ANN.

(*Holding out her basket.*) But I only want to buy some sugar.

JACK.

(*Romantically.*) "Sweets to the sweet." I shall now resume my place beside the cool waters of yon Sangamon where the fish spurn my endeavors to catch them by crook —*or* hook. (*Starts out door* R., *slowly and singing.*)

"Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat."

(*He is out and gone.* ABE *and* ANN *look after him.*)

ANN.

A curious fellow! Some think he is mad.

ABE.

Well, now, I reckon maybe he is a little bit mad, 'cause he keeps tellin' me I'm gonna be great some day. (*Laughs.*) Don't *you* think that's kinda crazy, Ann?

ANN.

(*Looking at him.*) I have every confidence in you, Abe.

ABE.

Well, now, that's right kind o' ya to say that, Ann.

ANN.

But you must have confidence in *yourself*. You must be ambitious.

ABE.

(*On the defensive.*) Ain't I been readin' and studyin' with Mentor Graham every chance I got?

ANN.

Yes, I know you have, Abe, and you've shown a great improvement.

ABE.

(*In the spirit of a pleased child.*) Have ya noticed it, Ann? Have ya?

ANN.

(*Laughing, lightly.*) Of course I've noticed it.

ABE.

And I've even took—taken—some lessons in ettiket so's you wouldn't be ashamed of me, Ann.

ANN.

(*Kindly and softly.*) I've *never* been ashamed of you, Abe. (*They stare at each other until she becomes confused.*) Oh dear, I don't know why I'm talking to you like this.

ABE.

(*Elatedly.*) I like to hear ya talk like this.

ANN.

But I came in here for two pounds of sugar.

ABE.

(*Goes to counter and puts a weight on the scales.*) *I'll* git the sugar—but *you* just keep on talkin'. (*Takes a bag from the counter and goes to a barrel in front of counter that contains some sugar and a large scoop. He opens the bag.*)

ANN.

(*Going up by counter at* C.) If you want to win this election, you can't spend your days fishing with Mr. Kelso or doing odd jobs for the people of New Salem. You've got to campaign—make friends—make speeches. People like to hear you talk, Abe.

ABE.

(*Embarrassed.*) Aw now, Ann, you're just sayin' that to make me feel good.

ANN.

No, I'm not, Abe. Your talks are always the best-liked of any at our literary and debating society. You've won nearly every debate for the past six months. You know that.

ABE.

Yes, I know, Ann, but —— (*Digs down in barrel and brings up a scoop of sugar.*)

ANN.

Look at the way you've won over those rough Clary Grove Boys. You seem to be able to bring most everybody around to your way of thinking.

(ABE *stands with the open paper bag in his left hand and the scoopful of sugar in his right hand.*)

ABE.

(*Looking at her, intently.*) There's one person I'd rather bring around to my way o' thinkin' than anybody else in the world.

ANN.

(*Looking away from him.*) Indeed? And who is it?

ABE.

Why, it's—it's —— (*He is looking straight at her and unconsciously pours the scoop of sugar slowly on the floor.*)

ANN.

Yes? (*Looking at him and seeing the sugar.*) Abe! The sugar! You've spilled it on the floor!

ABE.

(*Annoyed.*) I can't weigh up sugar and talk at the same time. (*Throws scoop back in barrel and bag on counter.*) Set down, Ann. Please! (*Comes down* L. *and motions her to easy chair at* L. C.)

ANN.

But the sugar is important.

ABE.

So's what I gotta say to you.

(*She sits. He paces up and down* L., *his hands in and out of his pockets, nervously.*)

ANN.

I'm waiting, Abe.

ABE.

(*Pausing down* L. *and clearing his throat.*) I wanta ask you a question, Ann.

ANN.

Yes?

ABE.

(*Nervously.*) I wanta ask you if—if—(*blurting it out*) if you think I oughta buy this store from Denton Offut.

ANN.

(*Amazed.*) Buy this store?

ABE.

(*Sitting on box down* L.) Yes, he wants to sell it to me. I've gotta do somethin' to make a livin'. 'Course, I could take up the blacksmith trade. That always makes right good money. And then there's law. Even right now I make somethin' extry once in a while writin' up deeds and such-like.

ANN.

But if you win the election, you won't need a store.

ABE.

But there's always a chance I mightn't win. Ya never can tell how folks is gonna vote. So I was figgerin' that if I had some established business, I might be able to—to—to—to do—to do —— (*He looks toward floor.*)

ANN.

Be able to do *what,* Abe?

ABE.

What I wanta do more'n anything else in this world.

ANN.

And what is that, Abe?

ABE.

(*Shyly.*) Can't ya guess, Ann?

ANN.

(*Smiling.*) I've never been very good at guessing games.

ABE.

(*Slowly.*) Well, now, I thought if I could make some money, I might be able to buy you lotsa purty dresses and bonnets and such-like.

ANN.

(*Amazed.*) Buy *me* dresses and bonnets?

ABE.

(*Softly.*) When we was married.

ANN.

(*Rising and gasping.*) Married! Oh, Abe!

ABE.

(*Rising and rushing to her.*) Don't faint, Ann. *Please* don't faint.

ANN.

I'm not going to faint, Abe, but it's—well—it's so sudden.

ABE.

(*Joyfully.*) Not with me it ain't. I've been thinkin' about it ever since the first day I met ya. (*Gaining courage.*) Will ya, Ann? Will ya marry me? *Will ya?* Please say "Yes."

ANN.

(*Sits again, slowly.*) I must have time to think it over.

ABE.

(*Kneeling by her side.*) I'll give ya all the time in the world to think it over—if ya'll just say "Yes" *right now.*

ANN.

(*Teasingly.*) What about Betsy Cameron? She's kind o' sweet on you, Abe.

ABE.

Well, now, that's too bad for her, 'cause I never loved anybody but you, Ann, and what's more, I never *will.*

ANN.

You know, I was engaged once.

ABE.

Yes, I know; to that feller who called himself John McNeil but whose real name was McNamar.

ANN.

But he went back east and never came back.

ABE.

(*Eloquently.*) I'll never leave ya, Ann, *never!* (*Holds*

out his arms to her, pleadingly.) Will ya marry me? *Please,* Ann!

ANN.

(*After a short pause, she speaks, quietly.*) Yes, Abe, I think perhaps I will.

(MARGARET *enters door* R. *She may wear the same costume as in* ACT I *or another of the same style if desired. She pauses in door and witnesses the scene before her with complete disapproval.*)

ABE.

(*In a stunned whisper.*) Ann! (*Louder.*) Ann! (*He rises, shouting.*) *Ann!*

MARGARET.

(*Topping his tone.*) Ann! Ann Rutledge! (ANN *jumps up, frightened.*) I thought it wasn't taking you all this time to get two pounds of sugar.

ANN.

Sister Margaret!

MARGARET.

(*Advancing to* R. C.) What's going on here?

ABE.

(*Yelling with glee.*) Ann has just promised to marry me.

ANN.

(*Protestingly.*) Abe, please! Do you want the whole town to hear you?

ABE.

(*Pacing up and down* L.) I want the whole *world* to hear me.

MARGARET.

(*Furiously.*) I've never heard of such nonsense. (*Taking hold of* ANN*'s arm.*) Have you lost your senses, Ann Rutledge? Promising to marry a backwoodsman without a penny to bless himself with?

ABE.

I'll make money, Miss Margaret. There ain't nothin' in this world I *can't* do with Ann as wife.

MARGARET.

Ann Rutledge, you come home with me this instant. (*Takes her to door* R.)

ABE.

Don't let her change your mind, Ann. Don't let *anybody* change it.

ANN.

I won't—Abe, *dear!*

MARGARET.

(*Jerking* ANN *closer to door* R.) Father shall hear of this.

ABE.

You bet he will, 'cause *I'm* gonna tell him. (*Laughs.*)

ANN.

(*As* MARGARET *pulls her out door.*) Abe, I forgot the sugar.

ABE.

(*Yelling after her.*) I'll bring it over tonight. (*Yells at the top of his lungs.*) Yippee! Hooray! Doggone my hide! (*He picks up boxes and bangs them down on the floor. He runs around and upsets barrels making a fearful racket.*)

(DENTON *enters door* L.)

DENTON.

What in tarnation's goin' on? Have ya gone crazy from talkin' to that Kelso feller?

ABE.

No, I've gone crazy from happiness. (*Goes to* DENTON, *grabs him and hugs him.*) Ann's gonna marry me. (*Yells.*) Hooray! (*Lets go of* DENTON.) I'll buy your store. I'll buy *anything.* I'm gonna win that election, by

thunder! (*Kicks a box to* C. *and stands on it, starting to orate.*) "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears." (JACK *enters door* R.) I'm gonna put steamboats on the Sangamon River. I'm gonna get a railroad through to New Salem. I'm gonna get free and better education for every mother's son and daughter. I'll try to make the laws *for* the people, *of* the people and *by* the people. (*To* DENTON.) I'm gonna campaign in every part of Sangamon County. I'll get on my horse and —— (*Stops suddenly.*) But I haven't *got* a horse. But I'll *get* one!

JACK.

(*Coming to* R. C. *and exclaiming.*) "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

(ABE *looks at him. They laugh.* DENTON *is frankly puzzled by all of this.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE 2.

TIME.—*August of 1835.*

(*At rise of curtain: The shelves are almost empty and many of the boxes and barrels have been removed. There is an air of complete desolation about the place. On the empty shelves is tacked a large sign reading: "All outstanding bills must be paid before further credit is given. Berry and Lincoln." Over the post-office window is a sign reading: "A. Lincoln, Postmaster."* MENTOR *is seated in easy chair* L. C. *He is dressed about as previously except that he might wear a different coat or shirt. He is reading an old book.* ARMSTRONG *enters door* R. *There is practically no change in his appearance except that his face is much cleaner.*)

ARMSTRONG.

(*Anxiously.*) Where's Cap'n Lincoln? (*Comes to* C.)

MENTOR.

Over to the Rutledges'. Ann's been taken down with the fever.

ARMSTRONG.

So I heerd. I also heerd Abe warn't feelin' any too well, that he's been hit by the plague.

MENTOR.

That's right. I stayed here with him all night, dosing him up with calomel, and looking after him.

ARMSTRONG.

This blamed plague o' the milk-sick is spreadin' all over Sangamon County.

MENTOR.

Yes, folks are dying like flies. It takes 'em off so quick. That's why I'm worried about Abe being out like this. I begged him to lie quiet but all the King's horses couldn't keep him away from Ann.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Going to stool* R. *and sitting.*) Never seen a feller so crazy over a gal in my life. Worser'n I was over my wife, Hannah, when I was courtin' her. But I got over it. (*Sighs, heavily.*) Guess gittin' married is the cure fer love-sickness.

MENTOR.

(*Smiling.*) I couldn't say. By the way, how *is* your wife? I heard she'd been taken with the fever.

ARMSTRONG.

Jest a touch of it. She tuk large spoons of boneset tea. Fixed her up purty quick.

MENTOR.

I'm glad to hear she's better.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Sadly.*) Ya can't kill my wife—(*sarcastically*) I'm afeerd.

(MENTOR *laughs, gently.*)

MENTOR.

Well, when Abe comes back I wish you'd try and persuade him to lie down for a spell.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Rises and struts to* C.) I'll jest pick him up and *throw* him on the bed—that is—ef he don't throw me on the floor fust.

(*They laugh.* ABE *enters door* R. *His hair is disheveled and his make-up has been powdered to a pale pallor. He may wear a different shirt for this scene to denote the passing of time but his trousers and shoes remain the same. He walks on weakly.* MENTOR *rises and goes to him, quickly.*)

MENTOR.

How are you feeling, Abe?

ABE.

(*Smiling, wanly.*) Oh, I'm all right, Mr. Graham. (*Sees* ARMSTRONG *and crosses to* C.) Hello, Sergeant Armstrong. Glad to see ya.

ARMSTRONG.

Heerd ya warn't feelin' so good, so I run over ter see ya.

ABE.

Well, now, that's mighty thoughtful of ya, Jack, but there's nothin' to worry about. Just a little touch o' the fever. Mr. Graham's fixed me up fine as silk. (*Smiles at* MENTOR.) 'Sides, I've just had news that'd cure me completely.

MENTOR.

(*Anxiously.*) You mean Ann is better?

ABE.

She's restin' quite comfortable, so Mrs. Rutledge said. She was sleepin' when I was over. I didn't get to see her, but the fam'ly feel encouraged about her condition.

MENTOR.

(*Sighs with relief.*) Well, I'm mighty glad to hear that.

ARMSTRONG.

So'm I.

ABE.

(*Hopefully.*) 'Course, I *knew* she'd get better. I've lost everything else. (*Looks around the store, sadly.*) It couldn't *be* that I'd lose her, too. (*Recites as though to himself.*)

> "O Thou in whose presence my soul takes delight,
> On whom in affliction I call,
> My comfort by day, and my song in the night,
> My hope, my salvation, my all."

(*There is a dignified silence. Finally,* ABE *smiles.*) That's Ann's favorite hymn. Pretty, ain't it?

MENTOR.

(*Quietly.*) Beautiful!

ARMSTRONG.

Yes—yes—so 'tis! (*Clearing his throat.*) What air they givin' Ann fer the fever?

ABE.

Large doses of Peruvian bark, boneset tea, jalap and calomel. That oughta fix her up. (*Smiles hopefully.*)

ARMSTRONG.

Boneset tea fixed up Hannah.

ABE.

Is your wife feelin' strong again?

ARMSTRONG.

Strong enuff ter throw a fryin'-pan at me this mornin'.

ABE.

(*Smiling.*) I'm glad to hear it.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Amazed.*) That she throwed a fryin'-pan at me?

(*All chuckle.*)

ABE.

No, that she's well again. She's a fine woman, your Hannah. Sorta reminds me of my step-ma, her that was Sally Bush.

ARMSTRONG.

Did yer step-ma ever throw fryin'-pans at yer pap?

ABE.

No, 'cause Pap didn't *need* it.

(ARMSTRONG *clears his throat with annoyance.* MENTOR *and* ABE *laugh.*)

MENTOR.

(*Coming to* ABE.) Now, Abe, I think you'd better go inside and lie down. You didn't get much rest last night.

ARMSTRONG.

Ef ya *don't,* I'll pick ya up and *take* ya in. (*Boastingly.*) And I kin *do* it, too.

ABE.

(*Grabbing* ARMSTRONG *as though to wrestle with him.*) Not if I get the "Injin holt" on you, ya can't.

(ARMSTRONG *grabs* ABE. ABE *releases* ARMSTRONG *and sways slightly as though about to faint. He staggers to easy chair* L. C. *and sinks in it.*)

MENTOR and ARMSTRONG.

(*Anxiously.*) What's the matter, Abe?

ABE.

(*Weakly.*) Nothin'—I'm just a little unsteady, that's all. (*Runs hand over forehead.*) Just let me set here for a second and I'll be all right.

ARMSTRONG.

I'll carry ya inside. (*Makes a move to do so.*)

ABE.

(*Brushing him away.*) Why, I can walk. It's just a little dizzy spell. It'll go away.

ARMSTRONG.

Whatchew need is some o' Hannah's good grub. I'll come over and git ya at supper time and take ya over fer a good feed. Hannah kilt a chicken this mornin'.

ABE.

(*Smiles, weakly.*) Well, now, that's awful kind o' you, Jack, and mebbe I'd feel better with a second-joint under my belt, but I can't leave the store. The mail's due in tonight and I gotta sort it out and stamp it. 'Sides, there's a coupla newspapers in that mail that I gotta read before folks calls for 'em. (*Laughs.*)

ARMSTRONG.

Whatsa matter with Bill Berry lookin' arter the mail for ya?

ABE.

Bill's just my partner in the store. He ain't postmaster. 'Sides, Bill ain't feelin' so well, neither. Ain't been for the past week or more.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Disgustedly.*) Ya mean, he's on a *drunk,* same as us'al.

ABE.

I said—he wasn't feelin' well. (*Smiles and rises, slowly.*) I believe I will rest a bit.

MENTOR.

(*Offering assistance.*) Need a little help?

ABE.

Well, now, I reckon a *bullet* is about the only thing that'd ever put Abe Lincoln outta commission. (*Laughs, faintly. Sees the book in* MENTOR'S *hand.*) Is that my surveyin' book?

MENTOR.

Yes, I've been reading page three hundred. (*Opens book to a certain page.*)

ABE.

Let me see it. I'll study it when I'm restin'. (*Takes book, starts slowly to door* L. *and reads aloud.*) "There are three different Horizons, the apparent, the sensible and the true."

ARMSTRONG.

(*Protestingly.*) Ya'll kill yerself readin' all them books.

ABE.

(*Pausing at door* L.) Knowledge never killed no man. They often die from a *lack* of it. (*Smiles.*) Tell Hannah to save me a drumstick. I might get over tomorrow. (*Exits, reading book.*) "The apparent or visible Horizon is the utmost ——" (*His voice trails off in the distance.*)

ARMSTRONG.

I never seen sech a feller ter read books. (*Goes to box down* L. *and sits.*) No wonder his head hurts. I always figgered too much readin' 'ud be bad fer a man. (*Scratches his head.*) I *found* a book oncet, but I never read it.

MENTOR.

(*Sitting in easy chair* L. C.) Why not?

ARMSTRONG.

I can't *read.*

MENTOR.

(*Laughing.*) What kind of book was it?

ARMSTRONG.

A *cook*-book.

MENTOR.

That would be a book for your wife.

ARMSTRONG.

That's what I figgered, so I give it t' her, but *she* never read it.

MENTOR.

Why not?

ARMSTRONG.

She can't read *nuther*.

(MENTOR *laughs.*)

MENTOR.

That's too bad, for in knowledge there is strength.

ARMSTRONG.

That ain't so. (*Rises and exercises the muscles of his arms.*) Look at them muscles! I never got *them* outta no books.

(CAMERON *enters door* R., *quickly. He, too, has made some slight changes in his attire—perhaps another vest, tie and coat. He still carries his walking stick.*)

CAMERON.

(*Coming to* R. C.) Where's Lincoln?

MENTOR.

(*Rising.*) Inside laying down. He's been pretty sick.

CAMERON.

So I've heard. Nothing serious, I hope?

MENTOR.

I hope not.

ARMSTRONG.

It *will* be seeryus ef he don't quit readin' all the time.

(MENTOR *observes* CAMERON'S *worried expression.*)

MENTOR.

What's the matter, Reverend? Anybody taken sick at *your* house?

CAMERON.

No, they're all well—thank God. I've just come from the Rutledge home.

MENTOR and ARMSTRONG.

(*Anxiously.*) It's Ann! How is she? Is it bad news?

CAMERON.

(*Sighing, heavily.*) I'm afraid so. She's ——

MENTOR.

Wait a minute, Reverend. (*To* ARMSTRONG.) Close that door, Armstrong. (ARMSTRONG *closes door* L., *noiselessly and carefully.*) Abe's pretty weak and such news might be too much for him.

ARMSTRONG.

Is she *wuse?*

CAMERON.

Yes, she took a sudden turn for the worse.

MENTOR.

But she might rally again.

CAMERON.

(*Sadly.*) I hardly think so.

ARMSTRONG.

Ya mean, ya think she'll *die?*

CAMERON.

(*Turning away from them.*) It looks that way, Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG.

Then Abe oughter be told.

MENTOR.

(*Protestingly.*) No—no!

ARMSTRONG.

He'd wanter be with her.

MENTOR.

It'll kill him, if she dies.

CAMERON.

(*Reverently.*) We are given the strength to bear our cross.

(ABE *opens door* L. *and stands in doorway.*)

ABE.

(*Quietly.*) What's the matter, Reverend?

(*The three men exchange glances and look away from* ABE.)

MENTOR.

(*Trying to smile.*) Why—nothing—Abe—nothing at all.

ABE.

(*Walking slowly to* CAMERON.) You've got some news for me, haven't ya, Reverend?

CAMERON.

(*Slowly.*) Why ——

MENTOR.

(*Interrupting, quickly.*) Why—NO! That is ——

ARMSTRONG.

(*Firmly.*) He oughter be told.

ABE.

(*Pondering.*) Oughta be told? Oughta be told *what?* (*Suddenly and hysterically.*) It's Ann! She's —— (*Grabs* CAMERON *by the lapels of his coat and shakes him.*) Is she worse? Tell me! I gotta *know!*

CAMERON.

Yes, she's ——

(*Off stage* R. MARGARET'S *voice is heard in the distance and growing stronger as she approaches door* R.)

MARGARET.

(*Off* R.) Abe! Abe Lincoln! Where are you? Abe!

ABE.

It's Margaret Rutledge!

MARGARET.

(*Off* R.) Abe! Abe! Where are you?

ABE.

(*Runs to door* R. *and calls out.*) Here I am, Margaret! Here I am. (MARGARET *enters door* R., *breathlessly and hysterically. She wears a plain calico dress and has a shawl over her head.*) What's wrong, Margaret?

MARGARET.

It's Ann! She's calling for you, Abe! She wants you, Abe! Come!

ABE.

Is she ——?

MARGARET.

I'm afraid so, Abe.

ABE.

(*Clenching his fists together with a determined look.*) No! No! She can't die! I won't have it!

MARGARET.

(*Through her tears.*) You'd better come quick, Abe, before it's too late. [*She runs out door* R.

CAMERON.

(*Joining* ABE *at door* R.) I'll go with you, Abe.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Going to* R. C.) Air ya able to make it, Abe? If ya ain't, I'll carry ya thar.

ABE.

God'll carry me to her. (*To* CAMERON.) Pray, Reverend, as ya never prayed before. Let your voice carry to the Heaven above. Make the Almighty God hear ya!

[*Runs out door* R. *followed by* CAMERON.

(ARMSTRONG *and* MENTOR *look after them with saddened expressions, shaking their heads, sorrowfully.*)

ARMSTRONG.

(*After a pause.*) I ain't never prayed in my life, Graham, 'cause I never learned *how* ter pray. But I'd like ter be able to pray now. You've got book-larnin', so mebbe you'll say a few words *fer* me.

(*Both men stand with bowed heads.*)

MENTOR.

(*Softly.*) "The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace, both now and evermore. Amen."

ARMSTRONG.

(*Reverently.*) Amen. (*There is a pause.* ARMSTRONG *goes to stool down* R. *and sits.* MENTOR *walks to* L., *his hands folded behind his back. Finally,* ARMSTRONG *speaks.*) Ya know, Graham, it jest don't seem right that a feller's gotter have as much trouble as Abe.

MENTOR.

That's not for us to say, Armstrong. (*Sits in chair by stove* L.)

ARMSTRONG.

Well, jest the same, I'm *a-sayin'* it. Ev'rything seemed ter go wrong since he lost the election coupla years back.

MENTOR.

Yes, he pretended not to be disappointed but I know he was, just the same.

ARMSTRONG.

I never could figger out why he *lost* that 'lection. Me 'n' the Clary Grove Boys derned near killed a lotta men who wasn't figgerin' on votin' fer Lincoln. An' we never let up on 'em till they promised ter vote *our* way.

MENTOR.

The trouble was that the country was stiffly Democratic.

ARMSTRONG.

But even a lotta the Demycrats voted fer Lincoln. Me 'n' the Clary Grove Boys *made* 'm vote. (*Shakes his fist and laughs.*)

MENTOR.

(*Rising and coming down* L.) That was in *New Salem.* But the effects of your forceful methods wasn't far-reaching enough to win for Abe a place in the legislature.

ARMSTRONG.

I believe he's *still* got a hankerin' ter git into politics.

MENTOR.

(*Sitting on a box down* L.) He hasn't given up the idea —not by a long shot. Why, together we've read and studied every law book obtainable.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Rising and coming to* C.) Yes, and broke down his health and nee-glected his business doin' it. While he was readin' all them books, he kep' gittin' poorer and poorer.

MENTOR.

(*Significantly.*) And richer and richer.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Annoyed.*) Now, how kin a man git richer when he's gittin' poorer? That sounds like some o' that crazy talk Jack Kelso puts out. (*Belligerently.*) And that's *another* thing! Abe'd leave this store ter set down by the river listenin' to Kelso talk talk nobody kin unnerstand.

MENTOR.

Abe understands it and he's richer for the association with Kelso.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Belligerently.*) How come he is? Why, Kelso ain't got a dime ter his name.

MENTOR.

But he's got the most priceless possession in the world —knowledge.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Scratching his head in wonderment.*) I still say too much eddication's bad fer a man, 'specially when it busts up his business.

MENTOR.

(*Reluctantly.*) Well—now—I'll admit that Abe has neglected his business for his love of learning, but you see he trusted Berry to look after the business *for* him.

ARMSTRONG.

And Berry's drunk all the time.

MENTOR.

Then, too, Abe trusted everyone when they had no money to pay. He judges everyone's honesty by his own.

ARMSTRONG.

Ev'rybody ain't "Honest Abe." He'll find *that* out. (*Sits in easy chair* L. C. *and sighs, heavily.*) Poor Cap'n Lincoln. I reckon he must have a powerful lotta debts.

MENTOR.

(*Sadly.*) A *great* many; but you never hear him complain. He's borne all his defeats like a man. But if Ann should go—well—I'm afraid of what might happen to him.

ARMSTRONG.

I never seen a man what set such a store by a gal. (*Sighs.*) Poor Abe! I wonder if he'll *ever* have any good luck in this world?

MENTOR.

Of course, but it won't be in *this* kind of business. Abe'll never make a successful storekeeper. He hasn't got the trader's nose for business. He's a scholar—a born leader of men.

ARMSTRONG.

Yep, he proved that in the Black Hawk War. When our regiment fust went out, there was two sides. One was always fightin' agin tuther. One night, Abe called us all tergether and said: "Boys, we ain't gonna git nowheres unless we stand tergether. In union thar's strength." And then he said somethin' 'bout a house deevided in half wouldn't stand up. So right then and thar we 'lected him cap'n.

MENTOR.

And as one body, one union, you defeated Black Hawk.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Proudly.*) Yes siree, we shore did. (*During the foregoing scene between* MENTOR *and* ARMSTRONG, *the lights have dimmed slowly. Occasionally, they blink to denote slight flashes of lightning. Intermingled with these flashes are distant rumblings of thunder which increase in volume. At this point, a loud crash is heard.* MENTOR *and* ARMSTRONG *jump up.*) Looks like a storm comin' up.

MENTOR.

(*Crossing to door* R. *and looking out.*) And a bad one, too. (*Turning back to* ARMSTRONG *at* C.) I wish I knew what was happening at the Rutledges'.

ARMSTRONG.

We'll larn soon enuff. Bad news travels faster'n hosses.

(*The lights blink furiously. There is a terrific crash of thunder.* BETSY, LOU *and* MARY *scream loudly off stage* R. *and then rush in through door* R., *terrified and screaming. They wear different dresses than in* ACT I.)

THREE GIRLS.

(*Speaking together in confusion.*) Save us! Abe! Save us from the storm! Oh, Abe!

MENTOR.

Abe isn't here, but just stay in here until the storm passes around.

LOU.

(*As they huddle together at* R.) I'm so frightened!

MARY.

So am I. Please close that door, Mr. Graham.

(MENTOR *goes to door* R. *and closes it.*)

BETSY.

Storms always scare me to death.

ARMSTRONG.

There ain't nothin' to be afeerd of. Lightnin' never hits ya but oncet. (*Laughs.*)

LOU.

How can you joke about such a thing, Jack Armstrong!

ARMSTRONG.

(*Laughing.*) Only wimmin-folks is skeerd o' storms.

(*A terrific crash.* ARMSTRONG *runs behind stove* L. *and hides. The girls scream and hide their faces with their hands.*)

BETSY.

This is dreadful!

LOU.

Maybe the world is coming to an end.

MARY.

Oh, sister Lou, don't say such terrible things.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Coming from behind stove.*) That shore was a whopper.

BETSY.

I thought you weren't afraid of storms.

ARMSTRONG.

(*Sheepishly.*) I *ain't*—but that hit when I warn't expectin' it.

(*Another crash. The girls scream.*)

MARY.

(*Excitedly.*) Can't one of you men do something?

MENTOR.

There's nothing we can do to curb the elements. (*Crosses to* C.)

BETSY.

If Abe were here, *he'd* protect us.

MARY.

Yes, where *is* Abe?

MENTOR.

He's gone over to the Rutledges'. Ann's pretty sick.

LOU.

Yes, I know. We were over early this morning and she was better.

MENTOR.

But she's taken a turn for the worse.

THREE GIRLS.

(*Looking at each other.*) What! She's worse? Oh, no!

BETSY.

(*Venturing to* MENTOR *at* C.) You mean—she's terribly, *terribly* ill?

MENTOR.

(*Looking away.*) I'm afraid so. Margaret came over for Abe. Said Ann was calling for him. Your pa was here at the time and he went along.

LOU.

(*Joining* BETSY.) You mean—she might—might—*die?*

ARMSTRONG.

That's what we're afeerd of.

(*The girls gasp, horrified.*)

LOU.

Father should have let us know.

MENTOR.

There wasn't any time for that.

BETSY.

We ought to go over there right away.

LOU.

But we can't in this storm.

MARY.

(*Going to door* R. *and listening.*) It's raining cats and dogs.

MENTOR.

There's nothing to do but wait and hope for the best. (*There is a terrific crash almost amounting to an explosion. The lights blink, furiously. The three girls huddle together at* R. C. *and scream. In the midst of this, the door* R. *opens and* ABE *stands there. His hair, shirt and trousers are soaking wet. His expression indicates clearly what has happened. Slowly, without a word, he walks to* C. *All eyes follow him. No one dares to speak. Weakly, he sits in easy chair* L. C. *All are rigid and tense. Rain is seen through open door* R. *The lights outside door and on stage are dimmed way down. The flashes of lightning come and go, illuminating the figures on stage.* MENTOR *goes to* R. *of chair and* ARMSTRONG *at* L. *Finally,* MENTOR *speaks, softly.*) Abe! She's ——?

ABE.

(*Quietly.*) Yes. (*Looks downward and wrings his hands in despair.*)

THREE GIRLS.

(*Hysterically.*) Oh, no! No! It can't be! Oh, Ann!

(ARMSTRONG *turns away to* L.)

ABE.

She's gone.

MENTOR.

I—I—don't know what to say, Abe.

ABE.

There ain't *nothin'* to say, Mr. Graham. Words can't help *now.* (*The three girls have turned their backs and are sobbing, quietly.*) She died just like my ma, Nancy Hanks, did back in Indiany these many years ago. The only two I've ever loved have been taken from me the same way.

(MENTOR *turns away up by counter* C.)

LOU.

(*Brushing away her tears and going to* ABE.) Isn't there something one of us can do, Abe?

ABE.

(*Tensely.*) There's nothin' nobody can do now, thank ya.

(LOU *turns back to the others.*)

MARY.

(*Sobbing.*) Poor Ann! I can't believe she's gone. I can't *believe* it.

ABE.

(*Hysterically.*) She was too young to die! It ain't right that she should be taken like this. Where is the justice in this world?

MENTOR.

(*Coming down and putting his hand on* ABE's *shoulder.*) Abe! You mustn't say such things.

ARMSTRONG.

(*On the* L. *side of* ABE.) Ya gotta take it like a *man,* Cap'n.

ABE.

(*Excitedly.*) A man's got feelin's, ain't he?

MENTOR.

(*Quietly.*) Yes, Abe.

(*Another explosive crash of thunder accompanied by vivid lightning.* ABE *rises, dramatically, speaking above the din.*)

ABE.

(*Raising his arms heavenward.*) Sound your trumpets, Almighty God, for the sweetest soul on earth has entered the Kingdom of Heaven! (*Goes to door* R. *and looks out. The rain increases in volume.*) Blow, ye winds! Pour, ye rains! For blessed are the dead the rain falls on! (*A vivid flash of lightning in* ABE'S *face. All watch him, tensely.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as* ACTS I *and* II.

TIME.—*Late afternoon of a winter's day. Sometime after* ACT II.

(*At rise of curtain: The setting is the same except that the sign above post-office window has been removed. The door* R. *is closed and the howling of the wind is heard outside. When the door is opened, snow is seen falling and a white cloth is on floor outside door. A red light glows in stove* L. ABE *is seated back of counter up* C. *He wears a white shirt with black bow-tie, black trousers and coat, and black shoes. His appearance is neater than at any time during the play. He is deeply interested in a large, old-fashioned lawbook spread on the counter before him. Finally, he shivers, rises and goes to stove* L., *never taking his eyes off the book.* KELSO *enters door* R. *and closes it behind him, quickly. He is dressed as formerly except for a long knitted muffler wound around his neck.*)

KELSO.

(*Shivering and rubbing his hands together.*) "Here is the place, my lord; enter. The tyranny of the open night's too rough for nature to endure."

ABE.

(*Turning and seeing him, delightedly.*) Jack Kelso! You look frozen.

KELSO.

(*Coming to* C.) Aye! frozen to the marrow, except my heart which still beats large and warm for thee.

ABE.

(*Laughing.*) Well, now, come over by the stove and warm up the *rest* of yourself.

(*They laugh as* KELSO *gets a box down* L., *brings it up by stove and sits.*)

KELSO.

(*Unloosening his muffler.*) 'Tis a sight for sore eyes to see you, my lord of Burgundy. 'Tis many a calendar day since last we met. (*Looks at* ABE'S *clothes.*) But how changed thou art. Thy raiment doth bespeak of prosperous times.

ABE.

(*Laughing.*) Well, now, that just goes to show that you never can tell a book by its cover. These new store-clothes ain't really mine—that is—strictly speakin'.

KELSO.

They're borrowed?

ABE.

No, the money that paid for 'em is. (*Laughs and sits by stove.*) My friend, Bowling Green, the Squire, said a man goin' into law oughta put up a good front, so he lent me the money to buy the clothes. (*With derision.*) As if *clothes* ever made a *man.*

KELSO.

So you're delving into law again, Abraham, my friend?

ABE.

Never really gave it up. Just set it aside for a while until I learned surveyin'. I made three dollars a day surveyin'.

KELSO.

A princely sum, my bucko.

ABE.

But Squire Green says I'll make even more practisin' law. He knows all the statutes and he's been teachin' 'em to me. He also persuaded me to go up to Vandalia and sit in on some of the sessions of the legislature.

KELSO.

So that's where you've been!

ABE.

Yes, up to the legislature studyin', listenin' and observin'.

KELSO.

And the result of your findings?

ABE.

Most of those lawmakers remind me of *fish.* They open their mouths *constantly* and say *nothin'.*

(*Both laugh.*)

KELSO.

A sage observation, my Duke of Gloucester. As the Bard hath written: "She speaks yet she says nothing."

ABE.

I never saw a place where men could agree so thoroughly on everything that's wrong and disagree on everything that's right. And most of 'em lack the courage of their convictions. And that's what I believe every man should have—the courage of his convictions.

KELSO.

The Bard hath declared: "This above all, to thine own-self be true."

ABE.

And he never wrote truer words. (*Determinedly.*) If I ever get a crack at some of our laws, I'll —— (*Stops, suddenly.*) But I've got a long way to go before that can happen.

KELSO.

You never can tell, my King Richard. Time works wondrous miracles. (*Pointing to book* ABE *holds.*) And what is the volume you peruse?

ABE.

(*Holding up book.*) This? Why, it's Blackstone's "Commentaries on the Laws of England." (*Laughing.*) And it's funny how I got hold of it. A man came by the store one day headin' west in a wagon. He needed money

and offered to sell me a barrel for fifty cents. I didn't need it but to help him out, I bought it. It was full of rubbish, but at the bottom I found this book. So you see, you never know where you're gonna find somethin' worth while.

KELSO.

Egad! How true! How long do you expect to remain in New Salem?

ABE.

Until I can find Bill Berry. Nobody seems to know where he is. He's just disappeared into thin air. I gotta get rid of what we used to call the Berry and Lincoln store. (*Laughs, sadly.*) The constables will take what little that's left to satisfy creditors.

KELSO.

(*Rising.*) Before the minions of the law barge in, I should like to make a cash purchase.

ABE.

(*Rises and goes back of counter at* L. *Puts book on counter.*) Well, now, anything we got left you can *have,* Jack. What'll it be?

KELSO.

(*Going to* C. *of counter.*) A pair of gloves to protect these useless hands of mine from the wintry blasts.

ABE.

(*Reaching under counter and pulling out a large pair of dark buckskin gloves.*) Just got one pair left—good dogskin.

KELSO.

(*Taking the gloves and examining them.*) Never heard of *dogskin* gloves. They're always *deerskin.*

ABE.

Well, now, I'll tell you how I know they're dogskin. Jack Clary's dog killed Tom Watkin's sheep, and Tom Watkin's boy killed the dog. Old John Mounts tanned

the dogskin and Sally Spears made the gloves. That's the way I know they're dogskin.

(*Both laugh.*)

KELSO.

(*Pulling coin from pocket.*) And what is thy price, my Shylock? A pound of flesh?

ABE.

Just wear 'em and be comfortable, Jack.

KELSO.

(*Putting coin back in pocket and donning gloves.*) With these, my hands, I bless thee. (*Holds hands above* ABE's *head in a mock blessing.*)

(*Both laugh.* DENTON *enters door* R. *He is dressed as formerly except that he wears an old, torn overcoat, rough cap and head tied around in woolen muffler.*)

DENTON.

(*Breathlessly.*) Abe! Abe Lincoln!

ABE.

(*Coming around* R. *end of counter and shaking hands with* DENTON.) Mr. Offut! I'm glad to see you.

DENTON.

And I'm glad ter see *you,* Abe, 'specially after what I've been hearin' about ya.

ABE.

(*Good-naturedly.*) Well, now, you're liable to hear most *anything* about me. What's it *this* time?

DENTON.

Heerd ya'd closed up the store and run off ter git outta payin' yer debts. But I knowed it warn't so and I told folks it warn't. I said: "Honest Abe'll pay every last cent."

KELSO.

(*Has gone over by stove* L.) Idle tongues brew mischief.

DENTON.

(*Seeing him and crossing between* ABE *and* KELSO.) Oh! so *you're* still in New Salem. I thought they'd rode you out on a rail long ago.

KELSO.

Greetings and salutations, my roisterer! Your face has been as scarce in this vicinity as virtue, honesty and truth. What strange lands have *you* been frequenting?

DENTON.

If ya mean, where have I been livin'—I've been livin' out Rock Creek way where there ain't no crazy people like *you.*

(KELSO *laughs.* DENTON *is annoyed.*)

ABE.

(*Smiling.*) Now, boys—boys!

DENTON.

And I come in with important news fer you, Abe, if I kin *tell* it to ya without this jackass brayin' and snortin'. I can't stand it. (*Gives* KELSO *a black look.*)

KELSO.

Then by my silence I shall be merciful. "The quality of mercy is not strain'd. It is twice blessed. It blesseth him that gives and him that takes." That's from The Merchant of Venice.

DENTON.

(*Snorting with rage.*) I ain't interested in them foreigners.

(KELSO *laughs and crosses to door* R.)

KELSO.

So I shall remove myself from the vision of those who find me objectionable. (*Pauses at door and speaks to* ABE.) I shall return, my noble Roman, when thou art at leisure to discuss the beauties of life unhampered by the presence of the proletariat. Farewell!

[*Exits door* R. *and closes it, quickly.*

DENTON.

What was that name he called me?

ABE.

(*Laughing.*) Never mind, Mr. Offut. Sit down and tell me the news. (*Motions him to easy chair* L. C.)

DENTON.

(*Sitting, irritably.*) That Kelso cuss gits me so riled, I almost fergit what I come to tell ya. (*Suddenly.*) Oh, yes! It's about Bill Berry. He's dead.

ABE.

(*Aghast.*) Dead?

DENTON.

Yep! A farmer, who lives out Rock Creek way, found him on a road. He died in the farmer's house. I rode in all the way ter tell ya.

ABE.

(*Going to stool* R. *and sitting, deep in thought.*) So he's dead!

DENTON.

Yep! Licker fin'lly got him.

ABE.

Leavin' me with over a thousand dollars' worth of debts to be paid.

DENTON.

It was a low-down trick fer Berry ter die and leave ya in this fix.

ABE.

(*Rising and clenching his fists.*) But I'll pay every cent some day—*somehow!*

DENTON.

(*Proudly.*) 'Course ya will, Abe. If I hadn't 'a' thought ya *would,* I never woulda turned all my debts over to ya in the *fust* place.

ABE.

(*Pacing up and down* R.) Debts! Debts! Debts! They're like little rats, a rat for every dollar, and they gnaw at me when I try to sleep.

DENTON.

(*Rising.*) Don't git discouraged, Abe. Ye're a smart feller. You'll pull out all right.

ABE.

Thank you for your confidence in me, Mr. Offut.

DENTON.

Always *had* confidence in ya, Abe. (*Crosses to door* R.) Well, I must be gittin' along. It's snowin' purty hard and the road might drift shet. (*Pauses at door.*) I may git in in the spring ter see ya.

ABE.

I might not be here then.

DENTON.

(*Amazed.*) Quittin' New Salem? (ABE *nods.*) Where be ya goin'?

ABE.

(*Grimly.*) If I can forget what a failure my life has been so far, I'm gonna *try* to be a lawyer.

DENTON.

(*Elatedly.*) Now ye're *talkin'*, Abe. Ya'll make a fust-rate lawyer. Ye're the best talker that was ever in these here parts. Ya ain't like that crazy Jack Kelso. When *you* talk, you *say somethin'*.

ABE.

(*Smiles, faintly.*) Thank you.

(BOWLING GREEN *enters door* R. *He is a short, stout, pompous man of authority and self-confidence. He is well dressed in the prevailing mode and wears a long overcoat and tall hat. He is a genial and likable middle-aged man with slightly grey hair.*)

BOWLING.

(*Seeing* DENTON.) Well! Denton, what are you doing in New Salem?

DENTON.

(*As he and* BOWLING *shake hands.*) Glad ter see ya, Squire Green. I jest run in from out Rock Creek way ter bring Abe a bit o' news. Goin' right back.

BOWLING.

What are you doing out Rock Creek way?

DENTON.

Somethin' I couldn't do in New Salem—making a livin'. (*Laughs and waves to* ABE.) Good-bye, Abe, and good luck to ya.

ABE.

Thanks, Mr. Offut, and thanks for comin' in.

[*With general "good-byes,"* DENTON *exits* R.

BOWLING.

(*Going to* C. *and noting* ABE'S *downcast expression.*) Bad news, Abe?

ABE.

Berry's dead and left me with enough debts to sink a steamboat.

BOWLING.

(*Brightly.*) Well, I wouldn't worry about that. We'll find a way to solve that problem. (*Slyly.*) As a matter of fact, I wouldn't be surprised if the answer to your problem isn't right outside. (*Pokes* ABE *in the ribs, playfully.*)

ABE.

What are you hintin' at, Squire?

BOWLING.

You remember that pretty young Miss Mary Owens from Green County, Kentucky?

ABE.

The one who visited you and Mrs. Green a coupla years ago?

BOWLING.

Yes, with her sister, Mrs. Bennet Able. Well, Mary's come to pay us another visit. She and Nancy are outside in the bobsled waiting to come in.

ABE.

(*Terrified.*) In—in—*here?*

BOWLING.

(*Chuckling.*) Yes, she wanted to see you again, so I drove her and Mrs. Green over. You know, I think she likes you, Abe.

ABE.

(*Embarrassedly.*) Why, Miss Owens has been brought up in style; gone to Kentucky schools to finish off young ladies. And she dresses in the finest trimmin's I ever saw. How could a girl like that like a big, long-legged galoot like *me?*

BOWLING.

Well, just the same, I think she does. And her sister, Mrs. Able, told my wife, Nancy, that she thought you had a future. And from what Nancy told *me,* I believe Mrs. Able would favor a union between Mary and you.

ABE.

(*Frightened.*) A—w-w-*what?*

BOWLING.

A marriage! What do you think of *that?* (*Laughs, heartily.*)

ABE.

I don't think *much* of it, I can tell you that.

BOWLING.

(*Amazedly.*) Why, Mary's the daughter of a rich farmer in Kentucky. You'd be feathering your nest.

ABE.

But I don't want no *nest,* nor *feathers* neither. (*After a pause.*) There was only *one* I wanted and she's —— (*He looks away, sadly.*)

BOWLING.

(*Sympathetically.*) Yes, I know, Abe, but life must go on. (*Starts to door* R.) I'll bring them in and you can talk to her.

ABE.

(*Runs and grabs him by the arm, pleadingly.*) Please don't, Mr. Green. I'm—I'm afraid of gals. Honest I am. *Terribly* afraid of 'em. Why, I never liked waitin' on women-folks here in the store. They always kinda scared me.

BOWLING.

(*Laughing.*) Nonsense! (*Opens door* R. *and calls out.*) Nancy, bring Mary in. (*Closes door, quickly.*)

ABE.

Squire Green, I wish you hadn't done that. There's so much I wanta talk to you about that women-folks don't understand. There's that transportation bill that's up before the legislature.

BOWLING.

That can wait until tonight, Abe.

(MRS. NANCY GREEN *enters door* R. *followed by* MARY OWENS. NANCY *is about* BOWLING'S *age and size; a sweet-faced, pleasant woman.* MARY *is about nineteen or twenty; a beautiful, charming girl, quintessence of culture and refinement. Both women wear handsome and expensive winter frocks and bonnets of the period with long shawls over their shoulders. Mittens and reticules complete their attire.* MARY *speaks with a decided southern accent.*)

NANCY.

(*Pleasantly.*) Good afternoon, Abe.

(*They advance to* C. *and* BOWLING *goes to* R., *closing door and removing his hat when the ladies enter.*)

ABE.

Howdy, Mrs. Green.

NANCY.

You remember Mary Owens, don't you, Abe?

ABE.

(*Fumbling with his clothes.*) Why—er—yes—of course.

MARY.

(*Advancing to him at* L. *with hand held high.*) It's nice seein' you again, Mr. Lincoln.

ABE.

(*Looking at her elevated hand.*) Thanks, Miss Owens. (*Pulls her hand down to waist level and shakes it. She looks amazed.*) Er—*why* did you come to New Salem?

MARY.

(*Shocked.*) What?

ABE.

I mean—*when* did you come to New Salem?

MARY.

Last evenin'.

ABE.

Are you stayin' long?

MARY.

Just a sho't while.

ABE.

That's fine—I mean—I hope you have a nice stay. Er—er—won't you sit down? (*Motions her to easy chair* L. C.)

MARY.

(*Sitting.*) Thank you, Mr. Lincoln.

NANCY.

(*Laughingly.*) You can call him Abe, Mary. Everybody does.

ABE.

Yes, there ain't nothin' stylish about me, Miss Owens. I'm just a plain, ordinary fellow that nobody'd want. (*He makes this very pointed.*)

BOWLING.

Now, Abe, you underestimate yourself.

NANCY.

Yes, you always do.

MARY.

(*Loftily.*) Modesty is a very charmin' trait, I must say, but it can be ovahdone. Squire Green tells me you're about to become a lawyah and a very promisin' one, too.

ABE.

(*Bashfully.*) Well, now, I don't know about that.

BOWLING.

(*Coming to* ABE.) But I do! (*To* MARY *and* NANCY.) As soon as he's admitted to the bar, he's going to open a law office in Springfield with a partner by the name of J. H. Stuart.

THE OTHERS.

(*Surprised.*) What? A law office? In Springfield? (*Etc.*)

ABE.

(*Aghast.*) Well, now, that's the first I ever heard of it.

BOWLING.

Just another little surprise for you, Abe. I have it all arranged.

ABE.

Well, now, that's mighty kind o' you, Squire. But do you think I've learned enough to be a flull-fledged lawyer?

BOWLING.

I'd be willing to trust myself in your hands any time. (*To* MARY, *mischievously.*) Wouldn't you, Mary?

MARY.

(*Very coy.*) Oh, Squire, you embarrass me, I declah you do.

(ABE *looks around as though for an avenue of escape as* NANCY *and* BOWLING *laugh, heartily.*)

ABE.

Er—that is—how's your sister? Is she still *able?* I mean—is she still *Mrs. Able?* (*Greatly confused.*) No, that ain't what I mean, neither. I'm all kinda mixed up. (*Tries to laugh.*)

MARY.

She's quite well and sends you her compliments.

ABE.

Well, now, that's right kind of her, Miss Owens.

NANCY.

You may call her Mary, Abe. I'm sure she won't mind.

MARY.

(*Looking at* ABE, *sweetly.*) I'd be delighted, I'm sho'.

ABE.

Well—now —— (*To* BOWLING.) When do you want me to start for Springfield?

BOWLING.

In the morning.

ABE.

(*Very ill at ease.*) Why can't I start *right now?*

(*All laugh but* ABE, *who has a woebegone expression.*)

NANCY.

It isn't *that* urgent; besides you're dining with us tonight. We're having roasted wild turkey.

ABE.

But I won't be hungry, Mrs. Green, and besides, I have a heap of studyin' to do and ——

BOWLING.

No excuses, Abe. Mary would be terribly disappointed if you didn't come, wouldn't you, Mary?

MARY.

(*Coyly.*) Why, of cou'se I would.

ABE.

(*Desperately.*) I shot a turkey once when we lived back in Indiana. It's the only thing I ever killed in my life. So I never eat turkey. It always reminds me of my only crime. (*The three laugh.*) So if you'll just excuse me this time, I'll ——

(ARMSTRONG *bursts in through door* R. *He is dressed as formerly except that he wears a long, old coat and a coonskin or old cloth cap. His neck is wrapped in a knitted muffler.*)

ARMSTRONG.

(*As he enters.*) Cap'n Lincoln! Oh, Cap'n Lincoln! (*Sees the assemblage.*) 'Scuse *me.*

ABE.

(*Rushing to him.*) What's the matter, Sergeant?

ARMSTRONG.

My wife, Hannah, 'ud like ya ter come over right away, but seein' that ya got comp'ny, why ——

ABE.

That's all right. Anything wrong?

ARMSTRONG.

Little Jack's been ailin' and Hannah can't git him ter sleep. He keeps callin' fer Uncle Abe ter come and tell him a story. And Hannah thought that mebbe ya'd ——

ABE.

(*Eagerly.*) I'll go right with you. I'll be *glad* to go, Sergeant. I'm glad you came for me. I don't know *when* I've been so glad to see you. (*To the others.*) Excuse me. (*Takes* ARMSTRONG *by arm and they rush out door* R. *leaving it open.*)

NANCY.

(*Closing door.*) He's gone without a hat or coat.

MARY.

(*Chagrined.*) Well! I nevah saw anybody so anxious to get away. I declah, I do believe it was on account of *me.* (*Rises.*)

BOWLING.

(*Pacifying her.*) Nothing of the kind, Mary. Abe's a great lover of children, especially the Armstrong children.

NANCY.

The Armstrongs have kind of adopted Abe. You see, through his influence, Abe has changed Jack Armstrong from one of the rowdiest bullies in New Salem to one of its most respected citizens.

MARY.

(*Still annoyed.*) Very commendable, I'm sho'. But fo' Mr. Lincoln to rush off like that without propah adieus—well—it's not the mannahs I'm accustomed to in Kentucky. No gentleman would act that way.

BOWLING.

Abe's just a little timid with the ladies, but after he gets to know you better—well, I'm sure you'll see the real Abe —the one Nancy and I have grown so fond of.

NANCY.

Everybody in New Salem loves Abe. Why, he'll do most anything to accommodate people. He's cut wood for me, picked apples, dug potatoes, and even held the yarn for me while I spun. He's so fine that you must overlook his lack of proper etiquette.

MARY.

That's what my sistah says, but I'm afraid Mr. Lincoln is deficient in those little links which make up a woman's happiness.

BOWLING.

I'll persuade him to come to supper tonight and then, perhaps, you'll change your mind. (*Going to* NANCY.) I'll tell him we're going to have *ham* for supper. I don't suppose he's ever killed a *pig*.

(*All laugh, lightly.*)

NANCY.

And now we'd better be getting home before night sets in. (MARY *and* NANCY *start to door* R. MENTOR *enters dressed in a long greatcoat and broad-brimmed felt hat, which he removes when he sees the ladies.* NANCY *speaks to him.*) Good afternoon, Mr. Graham.

MENTOR.

(*Bowing.*) How do you do, Mrs. Green? Good afternoon, Bowling.

BOWLING.

(*Bowing.*) Mentor!

MENTOR.

(*Sees* MARY *and goes to her.*) Do my eyes deceive me or is this Miss Mary Owens, from Kentucky? (*Removes his mittens and puts them in coat pocket.*)

MARY.

(*Laughingly.*) I sho' am Miss Owens, Mr. Graham. (*Holds her hand high to be shaken.*) I'm glad to see you, Mr. Graham.

MENTOR.

(*Shakes her hand.*) Thank you, Miss Owens. You grow prettier every time I see you, if such a thing is possible.

MARY.

(*Coyly.*) Oh, Mr. Graham, you flatterer! I declah, that sounds like a *Kentucky* gentleman.

MENTOR.

(*Amused.*) Is there such a difference between Kentucky men and those in Illinois?

MARY.

Well—*our* men pay a little mo' attention to mannahs than the *no'thern* men.

BOWLING.

(*Reprovingly.*) Now, I wouldn't say *that,* Mary.

MARY.

(*Quickly.*) No offense meant, Squire. Present company *always* excepted. (*Laughs, charmingly.*)

NANCY.

The southern men have more *time* for such things.

MENTOR.

Yes, the men up here do their own work. They haven't slaves to do it for them.

MARY.

(*Sympathetically.*) Seems a pity, too. Why, we just couldn't live without them.

MENTOR.

Maybe some day you'll *have* to.

BOWLING.

(*Smiling.*) You've been around Abe Lincoln so much, Mentor, that you share his views.

MARY.

(*Horrified.*) Don't tell me that Mr. Lincoln is one of those no'thern agitators mah fathah despises so?

MENTOR.

(*Firmly.*) Mr. Lincoln believes that all men should

be free, and it's one of his greatest ambitions to promote the movement for freedom.

MARY.

(*Derisively.*) A slave *free?* Why, that's just too absurd fo' words. (*Laughs, harshly.*) Such a thing will nevah come to pass, I can assu'e you. (*Going to* NANCY *at* R., *indignantly.*) If Mr. Lincoln has such ideas, I'd just as soon he didn't come to suppah. Fathah wouldn't want me to sit at a table with a man who believes in equality.

BOWLING and NANCY.

(*Protestingly.*) But, Mary ——

MARY.

(*At door* R.) Will you kindly take me home, Squire? I don't care to remain undah this roof any longah.

BOWLING.

You and Nancy get in the bobsled. I'll be with you as soon as I've had a few words with Mr. Graham.

MARY.

(*Haughtily.*) Ve'y well. Good aftahnoon, Mr. Graham.

(*General "good-byes" between* MARY, MENTOR *and* NANCY.)

NANCY.

(*As she and* MARY *exit door* R.) Now, Mary, you mustn't feel that way about Abe. He's —— (*She closes the door.*)

BOWLING.

I wish you hadn't said what you did, Mentor. Here I was, trying to do a little match-making between Mary and Abe, and you had to bring up the slave question. Kentuckians are very touchy on that subject.

MENTOR.

So is a certain Illinoisian I know. (*Chuckles.*)

BOWLING.

I must warn Abe not to be too free with his views on slavery.

MENTOR.

You'll never get Abe to suppress his opinions on anything he believes to be wrong.

BOWLING.

But there are divided opinions on slavery in Springfield and it might make him unpopular when he gets there.

MENTOR.

(*Surprised.*) He's going to Springfield?

BOWLING.

Leaves in the morning to finish his law course, be admitted to the bar, and open a law office with J. T. Stuart. I've arranged everything.

MENTOR.

(*Going to* L., *elatedly.*) That's the best news I've heard for a long while, Bowling. (*Sits on box* L.) I was terribly concerned about Abe after Ann died. He seemed to give up all hope—all ambition. Life just stopped for him. Why, I even feared for his reason.

BOWLING.

Yes, I know. Bill Green found him rambling in the woods along the river mumbling sentences Bill couldn't make out. (*Sits in easy chair* L. C.)

MENTOR.

It was useless to try to talk to him. I'd ask him questions and he wouldn't hear me. You and Mrs. Green did a heap toward bringing him back to himself again.

BOWLING.

Well, we tried hard, because I believe Abraham Lincoln will some day be a great man.

MENTOR.

I've always thought so.

BOWLING.

If he can be made to have as much confidence in himself as others have in him, he'll go far. And when he comes back, I want you to talk to him and try to instill in him the confidence he needs.

MENTOR.

I'll do my best, Bowling.

BOWLING.

(*Rises.*) Thank you, Mentor. (MENTOR *rises and they shake hands.*) I must go. Ladies never mind keeping the *men* waiting, but they hate for the men to keep *them* waiting. (*They laugh and he goes to door* R.) And you might tell Abe I'll accept his excuses for not coming to supper tonight.

MENTOR.

(*Chuckling, heartily.*) I understand, Bowling. Good afternoon.

BOWLING.

Good afternoon. [*Exits* R. *closing door after him.*

(MENTOR *smiles, then looks around room and wanders up to counter at* C. *where he sees the open lawbook. He picks it up, looks at it, smiles and nods approvingly. He brings the book to chair by stove* L. *and sits, reading. After a short pause, the door* R. *opens cautiously and* ABE *pokes his head inside, looking around. Then he enters, closing door after him, and rushes to stove* L., *shivering and warming himself.*)

ABE.

Howdy, Mr. Graham. Gee whittikers, I'm almost fruz. (*Blows on his hands.*)

MENTOR.

Where've you been without a hat or coat?

ABE.

Armstrong came over for me. Little Jack's been sick and Hannah wanted me to get him to sleep. You know,

that was the first time in my life I was ever glad to hear of *anybody* bein' sick.

MENTOR.

(*Amazed.*) Why, Abe!

ABE.

I had visitors that made me feel kinda uneasy—that is—one of 'em did. So it was a good chance to get away.

MENTOR.

(*Slyly.*) You mean Miss Owens?

ABE.

Well, now, I reckon I do. Gals always upset me so, 'specially one with high and mighty ways like Mary Owens. I just get weak in the knees and my feet don't seem to be able to hold me up—even though they're as big as the boats on the Erie Canal. (*They both laugh.*) Guess I wasn't cut out for a ladies' man. (*Worriedly.*) I wish I didn't have to see Miss Owens again.

MENTOR.

I don't imagine you will. Squire Green tells me you're leaving for Springfield in the morning.

ABE.

But I've got an invitation to supper tonight at the Squire's and she'll be there.

MENTOR.

Bowling told me to tell you he'd accept your excuses.

ABE.

(*Greatly relieved and smiling.*) Well, now, that's right kind o' the Squire.

MENTOR.

I guess he's afraid you two couldn't agree on the subject of slavery. She's a Kentuckian, you know.

ABE.

(*Getting a box and bringing it up by stove.*) Yes, I

know. And that's the greatest reason I'd like to get into lawmakin'—to put an end to this tyranny.

MENTOR.

The south is firm in its convictions that slavery is just and right. And there are many in the north who share those opinions.

ABE.

If somethin' could only be done to make everyone see the injustices of this inhuman traffic in souls. Many northern newspapers print editorials against slavery but that doesn't seem to be enough to stir the people. Now, if someone would only write a book—a book that would touch the hearts of men—a book showing a black man as a persecuted saint—that might help.

MENTOR.

Why don't you write it, Abe?

ABE.

Well, now, I couldn't write a book, Mr. Graham.

MENTOR.

There's nothing you couldn't do if you'd only have confidence in yourself.

ABE.

Thank you, Mr. Graham, but book-writin' ain't in my line. I believe such a book ought to be written by a woman. Women-folks have a more touchin' way of sayin' things than men. Such a book might stir the nation.

MENTOR.

Then you believe that the pen is mightier than the sword.

ABE.

That was one of our debates when we first formed the New Salem Debatin' Society. And I allowed *both* had their good *points.* (*They laugh. Off stage* R. *the three* CAMERON *girls are heard to chatter and laugh.* ABE *rises,*

annoyed.) More women! I hope they ain't comin' in here.

(*The door at* R. *opens and the three* CAMERON *girls enter followed by* CAMERON. *The girls are dressed in winter attire with shawls and bonnets. A great-coat covers* CAMERON'S *former outfit. He wears his tall hat and carries his cane. He closes the door.*)

THE THREE.

(*As they enter.*) Abe! Abe Lincoln! Where are you?

ABE.

(*Going to* L. C. MENTOR *rises, putting book on chair.*) Why, it's the Reverend and the girls. (*Pleasantly.*) Howdy!

(*General "hellos" and "how do you do's?"*)

CAMERON.

We heard you were leaving New Salem?

THE THREE GIRLS.

(*As they gather around* ABE *at* C.) Is it true?

ABE.

In the mornin'.

MARY.

So Mrs. Green told us and we just had to come over and say good-bye.

ABE.

Well, now, that's right thoughtful of you.

BETSY.

(*Looking at him soulfully.*) I'll miss you dreadfully, Abe. I guess *I'll* miss you more than anybody.

LOU, MARY and CAMERON.

(*Reprovingly.*) Betsy!

BETSY.

(*Looking toward* CAMERON.) I mean—we'll *all* miss you. *Everybody* will. Won't we, Father?

CAMERON.

Of course.

LOU.

There'll be nobody to tell us any jokes.

MARY.

Or to help us pick apples at Hallowe'en.

BETSY.

You've always been *such* a help.

ABE.

Well, now, I like to be able to help folks. Reckon I'll miss New Salem, too. Folks here have been mighty kind to me.

CAMERON.

There are some mighty nice people in New Salem.

ABE.

Well, now, Reverend, I think most people are nice if you just give 'em a chance to be. And you have to meet an unpleasant person once in a while to remind you how nice *most* folks really are.

(*All laugh.*)

CAMERON.

(*Crossing to* ABE *at* C.) Squire Green tells me you're going to take up the practise of law in Springfield.

ABE.

Well, now, I *hope* to.

MENTOR.

(*Proudly.*) Abe's going over there and show those *other* lawyers what a *good* lawyer is really like.

CAMERON.

Well, I doubt if he'll do *that,* but I wish you success just the same, Abe. (*Extends his hand which* ABE *takes.*)

ABE.

Thank you, Reverend. You see, I figure that Springfield might be a pretty good place to start. It's an up-and-coming town. I wouldn't be suprised if some day it might be the biggest town in Illinois.

CAMERON.

Well, I doubt *that,* Abe.

MENTOR.

It's got fifteen hundred people right *now,* and it's still growing.

BETSY.

Oh, I'd be scared to death in a big city like that.

(*The other two girls silence her.*)

ABE.

And there's talk about removin' the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield.

CAMERON.

I doubt if that will ever happen.

MENTOR.

Anything can happen after Abe Lincoln gets there.

(*All laugh.*)

ABE.

I'm afraid you overestimate my abilities, Mr. Graham.

CAMERON.

Yes, I'm afraid he does.

(*Through the door* R., MARGARET *enters, silently, and closes the door after her without being observed by the others. She is dressed entirely in black and car-*

ries a reticule containing a black-bordered handkerchief. Noiselessly, she slips up to extreme R. U. *corner of room and remains out of sight. A heavy black veil on her bonnet conceals her face.*)

MENTOR.

(*Belligerently.*) Squire Green says that if Abe can be made to have the same confidence in himself as others have in him, he'll go far.

CAMERON.

The Squire isn't always right—but—then you never can tell.

BETSY.

(*Coming forward.*) Ann used to say ——

(ABE *swallows hard.*)

LOU and MARY.

(*Tugging at* BETSY'S *sleeve.*) Betsy!

LOU.

(*In a half-whisper.*) You were told not to mention Ann.

BETSY.

I'm sorry.

ABE.

(*With a wan smile.*) That's all right, Betsy. I *wanta* hear what Ann used to say.

BETSY.

(*Looking at* LOU *and* MARY, *frightenedly.*) Well—she said ——

ABE.

Go on, Betsy.

BETSY.

She said you were born to be great.

ABE.

(*Quietly.*) Ann had a lot of confidence in me. (*Clears his throat.*)

CAMERON.

Well, it's getting toward evening so we'll be getting along before dark. (*Extends hand to* ABE.) Good-bye, Abe, and good luck.

(*From this point on, the lights dim slowly, almost imperceptibly at first.*)

ABE.

Thank you, Reverend, and I hope some day I can overcome any *doubts* you've had about me.

(*They laugh and* CAMERON *goes to door* R. MARGARET *half conceals herself behind what was the post-office window.*)

MARY.

(*Coming forward.*) Good-bye, Abe.

ABE.

(*They shake hands.*) Good-bye, Mary. (*And as* LOU *comes to him,* MARY *joins* CAMERON *at door* R.) And Lou! (*They shake hands.*) I'll never forget all your kindnesses to me.

LOU.

New Salem is a better place for your having lived here.

CAMERON.

Well, I wouldn't say *that,* but ——

LOU and MARY.

(*Reproachfully.*) Father!

(LOU *has gone to* R.)

BETSY.

(*Coming to* ABE, *timidly.*) There was a time, Abe, when I thought perhaps—that maybe—that —— (*Suddenly bursts into tears and runs to others at* R.) I'm going to cry.

LOU and MARY.

So am I. (*All three sob.* CAMERON *opens door* R. *They file out calling through their tears.*) Good-bye, Abe.

[CAMERON *exits after them closing door.*

ABE.

(*Puzzled.*) Why is it women-folks always have to *cry?* It always upsets me somethin' terrible.

(MARGARET *comes down* R. *and puts back her veil.*)

MARGARET.

(*Quietly.*) I promise I shan't cry, Abe, when I say good-bye.

ABE and MENTOR.

(*Greatly surprised.*) Margaret Rutledge!

MARGARET.

I heard you were leaving, Abe, and I want to talk to you before you go. May I?

ABE.

(*Still flustered.*) Why—yes—*yes*—of course.

MARGARET.

(*Looking at* MENTOR.) *Alone?*

MENTOR.

Certainly, Margaret. I'll just run along. (*Starts to* R.)

MARGARET.

No, don't leave. If you'll just wait in that next room. If you don't mind.

MENTOR.

(*Going to door* L.) Not at all.

ABE.

There's a chunk or two of wood in there I cut last night. You can build a fire, Mr. Graham.

MARGARET.

I shan't stay long.

MENTOR.

Take your time, Margaret. I'll be comfortable.

[*Exits door* L.

ABE.

(*Motions her to easy chair* L. C.) Won't you sit down, Margaret?

MARGARET.

(*Sitting.*) Thank you, Abe. You see, Mother and I are leaving New Salem, also.

ABE.

(*Astounded.*) Leavin' here? Why?

MARGARET.

We've sold the Rutledge place.

ABE.

What for?

MARGARET.

Necessity. We've had rather a hard time getting along since Father died. And then, sister Nancy is getting married and that place is too large for just Mother and me.

ABE.

(*Gets a box and sits at* L. *of* MARGARET.) Where will you be goin'?

MARGARET.

To Iowa.

ABE.

Well, now, I hear that Iowa's a right nice country and you oughta be happy out there.

MARGARET.

We'll *try* to be. And now I have some news for you. (*After a pause.*) Do you remember Ann speaking of a man named McNamar?

ABE.

You mean the one who called himself McNeil and who once kept company with Ann?

MARGARET.

That's the one. Well, he's back in New Salem.

ABE.

(*Rises.*) What's he doin' here?

MARGARET.

He's buying up property for speculation. He's rich and prosperous. It was *he* who bought *our* place.

ABE.

(*Pondering.*) John McNeil buyin' the home of Ann Rutledge! (*Fiercely.*) It don't seem right.

MARGARET.

(*Quietly.*) There's nothing really *wrong* about it, Abe. Houses aren't important unless those we love dwell within them.

ABE.

(*Sitting again.*) Well, now, I guess you're right.

MARGARET.

Abe, this may be the last time you and I will ever meet.

ABE.

I'd hate to think that, Margaret.

MARGARET.

So would I—and yet it might be true. We're going in opposite directions. But before we part, I want to talk to you about Ann. (*Quickly.*) Without tears, mind you.

ABE.

(*Sadly.*) Yes, Margaret.

MARGARET.

You recall, of course, that at first I opposed the union.

ABE.

Well, now, my memory ain't as good as it might be, and I can't recall unpleasant things very well.

MARGARET.

(*Smiling.*) That's generous of you, Abe. (*Slight pause.*) You see, I thought you hadn't any future, but now I agree with what Ann used to say: "Abe was born to be great."

ABE.

Betsy Cameron just told me Ann said that.

MARGARET.

That and much *more!* When she was ill of the fever, she used to lie there with a far-away look as though she were gazing into the future. She saw you as a great leader—a man who would sway a nation—whom all people would love and one day mourn.

ABE.

Well, now, that was in her delirium.

MARGARET.

No, she was quite conscious at the time. Her love for you was so great that it envisioned the greatest things. And you must justify her faith in you. You must go on and *on*—and up and *up*—until you have scaled the heights.

ABE.

I'll *try*—for *her* sake, Margaret. But it's been mighty hard to even keep on livin' without her. You'll never know how lonely I've been without her.

MARGARET.

I understand, Abe. We've been lonely without her, too.

ABE.

There were times when I thought I couldn't stand it. A man can't have a love like that taken away from him without the brightest days seeming like the darkest nights.

MARGARET.

A love like yours and Ann's never dies.

ABE.

I shall love her till the end of my days. There'll never be another for me.

MARGARET.

Some day you will marry.

ABE.

(*Firmly.*) Never!

MARGARET.

(*Smiling.*) But you will. A man like you does not live alone. It might be some ambitious woman who will spur you on. But until that happens, let the memory of Ann's faith in you be your inspiration. (*Rises, speaking dramatically.*) On to Springfield, Abe—and from there to *Washington!*

(*By this time the lights are quite dim.*)

ABE.

Well, now, that's a mighty large order and I doubt if I'll ever be great enough for that.

MARGARET.

"Some are born great. Some achieve greatness. And some have greatness thrust upon them. Be not afraid of greatness." (*Tenderly.*) For *Ann's* sake.

ABE.

I'll work with all my might—for Ann's sake. But there's so much to be done and so little time in which to do it.

MARGARET.

Why, you have a whole lifetime ahead of you.

ABE.

But there's more than a lifetime's mistakes to be corrected.

MARGARET.

I'm depending on *you* to correct them. And now good-bye. (*Extends her hand which he takes, slowly.*) No tears, mind you, but with a smile.

ABE.

With a smile. (*They face each other with clasped hands and smile.*) And may God be with you now and forever.

MARGARET.

(*Sweetly.*) And with *you,* Abe. (*She goes to door* R. *He follows her, opening door.*)

ABE.

Shall I light the lantern and see you home? It's pretty dark.

MARGARET.

I'm not afraid. I'm not afraid of *anything.*

[*She slips silently through the door.*

(*He stands there, looking after her. The snow falls outside. A small, soft white light just large enough to cover* ABE'S *face comes from off stage* R. *He stands in the light, looking as a man transfixed.*)

ABE.

And *I'm* not afraid of anything. (*Forcefully.*) I am not afraid of greatness.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Growing Up

A DOMESTIC FARCE IN THREE ACTS

By JEAN PROVENCE

Five Men | *Five Women* | *One Interior Setting*

ROYALTY, $10.00 | PRICE, 75 Cents

THE trials and tribulations of a small-town American family are related with pungent realism, punctuated by a rowdy comedy in the lines of this play. Situations are catapulted one upon another and there's no lack of animation. The play is forged about two families who indulge in wordy pyrotechnics over the misdeeds of their respective progeny, two mischievous children, who are forever engaged in some deviltry. The father of one family is a long-suffering creature burdened with a whining wife, who proclaims herself a martyr. The most hilarious scene is reached when the father, by engaging in fisticuffs with his autocratic employer, wins a month's respite within the restful precincts of the city jail so that he may complete an invention upon which he has been laboring for many years amid the strife of family life.

"*The Characters were so realistically drawn in GROWING UP at the Gateway Players' Club I had to look twice to make sure I was not seeing my own neighbors on the stage.*" Hollywood Low-down.

"*The Author has woven together reels from an old Keystone comedy, pages from Joe Miller's Joke Book and a lot of new gags to make an hilarious evening's entertainment.*" Beverly Hills Citizen.

BAKER'S PLAYS

178 TREMONT STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

448 SO. HILL STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Peck's Bad Boy

NEW AND MODERN VERSION OF THE FAMOUS
GEORGE W. PECK STORIES

By CHARLES GEORGE

Six Men | *Six Women* | *One Interior Setting*

ROYALTY, $10.00 | BOOKS, 50 Cents

IN A screamingly funny, fast-moving farce comedy, Mr. George has placed all the well-known Peck characters, such as Schultz, the grocer; Henry Peck, Sr., the bad boy's Pa; Henry, Jr., the "bad boy," and his pal, Jimmy Duffy, two characters that will rival Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn in popularity. For many, many years, Peck's Bad Boy was presented in the professional theatres of every city and town in the United States, where its annual visit was awaited with pleasant anticipation. Heretofore, no published version of this play was available for amateurs, but now audiences and players alike can revel in the pranks and antics of the famous "bad boy." It's clean! It's wholesome! It's funny! It's easy to cast, stage and produce. It's ideal for high schools, churches, and all groups desiring a genuinely comic play. It's one hundred per cent American in story and characters. Eight of the characters are young people. All of the foregoing is the highest recommendation we can give to a play for amateur groups. There are two delightful young girl parts in Luella, the bad boy's stepsister; and Minnie, his girl, who will remind you of Becky Thatcher in Tom Sawyer. You'll roar at the pranks the "bad boy" plays on Dahlia, the colored cook, and on the excitable, explosive Dutchman, Schultz, the grocer. You'll enjoy seeing the boy get even with his stepmother for bossing and henpecking his Pa. He and his pal keep things moving at a merry pace for three side-splitting acts of uproarious comedy. There have been many noted players who have portrayed the rôle of the "bad boy" but perhaps the most famous is the renowned George M. Cohan, who, as a young man, toured the country in this celebrated character. We are proud to present PECK'S BAD BOY to our patrons. We told you what TOM SAWYER would do, and we make the same prediction for this play.

BAKER'S PLAYS

178 TREMONT STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

448 SO. HILL STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

The Mad Hatters

A Riotous Farce in Three Acts
By Kurtz Gordon
FOUR MEN EIGHT WOMEN
INTERIOR SET

THE Hatters. What a family! Mad as March hares! Crazy as loons! Dizzy as pinwheels! Dippier than the Big Dipper! And nuttier than a Christmas fruit cake! In fact, they are all nuts! Margaret Hatter, the mother, is nuts about dramatics. Joe Hatter, the father, is nuts about fishing. Gigi, their daughter, is nuts about athletics. Bunny, their son, is nuts about photography and Angelica, their housekeeper, is just plain nuts.

Grandma Hatter has been supporting them for years and suddenly decides it's time to quit. She gives them all three months to prove they can make their own living. If only one of the entire family will succeed, she will renew their monthly allowance. Not having earned a penny in their lives, they unanimously agree to commercialize their hobbies and show Grandma Hatter a thing or two. Diana, the youngest daughter, returns from a trip and announces her engagement to Henry Harrison, an amateur playwright whose mother turns out to be an old rival of Mrs. Hatter in a stock company years ago. And from then on, things happen fast and furiously. At the expiration of the three months, all have failed but Joe, who brings home the bacon at the last minute, and how he brings it home is nobody's business. Sometimes they don't make much sense, these mad Hatters, but they do create a lot of laughs for any audience, and you'll love every one of them; the madder they get the more you'll love them.

THE CHARACTERS

Gigi Hatter
Angelica
Bunny Hatter
Joe Hatter
Margaret Hatter
Grandma Hatter
Diana Hatter
Nancy Hayward
Mugzie Mullen
Henry Harrison
Elizabeth Harrison
Clara Sheldon

Books, 50 *Cents Each* *Royalty*, $10.00

BAKER'S PLAYS · BOSTON, MASS.

The Inspector General

A FARCICAL COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

By NIKOLAI GOGOL

Translated and adapted for American production by
JOHN DOLMAN, JR. and BENJAMIN ROTHBERG

Nineteen Men *Nine Women* (some parts can be cut or doubled)
Two Interior Scenes

ROYALTY, $15.00 BOOKS, 75 Cents

THIS is a world classic, one of the most popular comic plays of all time, in a new version that has the fast tempo and vitality of the Russian original, rendered into lively, colloquial American speech. It was prepared by an American author and little theatre director in collaboration with a Russian actor and was tried out under their direction by the Players' Club of Swarthmore, Pa The production was extremely successful, pleasing both the well-read, critical, theatre-wise group, and the unthinking who came solely to be amused. It drew as many as two hundred and seventy-three recorded laughs in a single performance and delighted the audiences with its good-humored but penetrating satire on small-town politics, graft and provincialism. The plot is very simple, dealing with the frantic attempts of the Town Governor and his associates to cover up their incompetence, neglect and dishonesty by lionizing the young man they mistake for a government inspector. They bribe him, feast him, flatter and cajole him, only to discover that he is not the inspector at all, and the play ends in panic and consternation as the arrival of the real Inspector-General is announced.

BAKER'S PLAYS

178 TREMONT STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

448 SO. HILL STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By CHARLES GEORGE

Based on the famous novel of the same name by John Fox, Jr.
Author of "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," etc.

Five Men *Eight Women* *One Interior Setting*

ROYALTY, $10.00 BOOKS, 50 Cents

IN A section of the Kentucky mountains, known as Kingdom Come, a homeless boy had been cared for by two mountain people, whom he knew as "Uncle Jim" and "Aunt Jane." One year, a cholera plague swept the hills and when the Grim Reaper moved on, Chad was alone. A hard-fisted, cruel mountaineer claimed "Uncle Jim" owed him "A heap o' money" and sought to have Chad bound out to him until he was twenty-one. Fearing Nathan, Chad took to the hills with his faithful dog, Jack.

He finally landed with a family by the name of Turner. Boarding with the Turners was the mountain school teacher, who soon recognized in Chad a most unusual boy with a thirst for knowledge and a love of the finer things. Then one spring, the Turner men took Chad to Frankfort on a raft of logs which they were floating down the river to sell. Becoming lost from the men in Frankfort, Chad started to walk back to the mountains. On the road, he was picked up in a car belonging to Major Calvin Buford, of the Kentucky aristocracy. The Major was possessed of a kindly heart and when he heard the boy's story, he took him to his palatial home.

The Major, a bachelor, lived with his maiden sister, Miss Lucy Buford, who was no less shocked than her servants and neighbors at the advent of this illiterate mountain boy in the Buford home. But the Major insisted that he be raised as one of their own and given their name. The Bufords' next-door neighbors were General and Mrs. Dean. When Chad met Margaret, their attractive young daughter, it was a case of love at first sight.

Chad's parentage is cleared for it is proved that he is a direct descendant of one of the Buford clan. Restored to his proper place in the sun, after a year at the university, Chad returns to the "Blue Grass" and wins the hand of Margaret and the respect and admiration of all.

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178 TREMONT STREET, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

448 SO. HILL STREET, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA